

Dear Class of 2020,

In thirty years when we talk about the infamous year of 2020, I hope that the first thoughts that come to mind are not your regrets. This is the word I am guilty of using too many times throughout this crisis. I vividly remember my last moments at Saint Andrews. I yelled one last joke to Dana before running across the dining hall with my red suitcase to make sure I was not the last person on the New York bus once again because I had received a standing ovation the last time that happened. After hearing the news of no longer being able to return to campus, my first thought was that I should have packed earlier to carve out time to bother Profe one more time on my way out, I should have hugged Bwembya goodbye one more time, I should have done a lot of things I regret not doing. We all wish there was something we did differently throughout our time at Saint Andrews but I hope you will begin to see those moments as an opportunity to learn from and be better in the future. Last year, I had one of my best discussions with my roommate Camille, I couldn't possibly understand why she claimed not to have many regrets and I didn't start understanding this until a couple weeks ago.

We have unintentionally taken the gift of human connection for granted before this pandemic began. Parents read us articles, Mr. Roach gives us speeches, and Will Rob even started a revolution to warn us of the negative effects screens have on the way we interact and live our daily lives. This warning of course is ignored for one simple reason, technology keeps us in contact with one another and it makes connecting easier but the thing is I am currently frustrated with technology. A facetime call can not make up for a friendly hug when I need one the most, a zoom class can not make up for the magic that occurs in a classroom when students build off each other's energies and overcome anything the teachers challenge them with, a virtual dorm function can not replace the random laughter of underclassmen on dorm and the impromptu dance parties. Technology is just not enough when we need it the most. So I find myself again regretting not being fully present in each class, each dance, each function because I was always rushing from one place to the next.

Despite any regrets we may feel about the way we left things at Saint Andrews, the truth is, class of 2020, you have given St. Andrews your all. It is this class that has redefined what fun at Saint Andrews looks like, it is this class that continued to lead the school from 73 different locations across the world, it is this class that has recreated Saint Andrews traditions despite the challenges, it is this class that will survive a pandemic and it is ultimately this class that has made history. You have proven once again that Saint Andrews is not special because of the physical place we were in but rather it is the spirit and the grit of its students. So instead of regretting the moments we didn't have, we can cherish the moments we did have which shaped the great people we are today and we can embrace the uncertainty of the future as an opportunity to do better. To love each other more intentionally and to take the time to appreciate those who have positively impacted us. This pandemic has revealed the most vulnerable aspects of our communities, our governments, our economy and much more but as the one and only Oprah said,

“This moment is your invitation to use your education to begin to heal our afflictions, to apply the best of what you’ve learned in your head and felt in your heart”. Our class and all other graduating classes of 2020 are now connected through a shared vision, regaining the power of human connection. Regaining the stability, regaining the trust, and regaining the integrity it allows for. We have experienced first hand what isolation can do to relationships and although today we are not receiving Mr. Roach’s firm handshake as a proper send off, these faculties, these parents, and these teachers have already gifted us with the knowledge and the courage to learn from this pandemic and to heal the world outside of Saint Andrews.

Now this speech wouldn’t be complete without a thank you. Throughout these past four years we have made unforgettable memories, we have built an unforgettable family, and we will continue to go on unforgettable adventures together. Although Billy and I are truly blessed to say we led the class of 2020, the truth is you led us to be better people in every way possible with your creativity, your love for each other and your love for Saint Andrews. Thank you parents and St. Andrews for bringing together the most amazing group of people, the people who have become my support system, the people who I will forever call family. Until the next time, class of 2020.