

## **Valedictorian Remarks --- June 2, 2018**

Colden Auditorium, Queens College

**Andrew Soltesz**, *Class of 2018*

Good afternoon Mr. Karsten, Mr. Penikas, Administration, faculty, family, friends and classmates.

I am so honored to be standing here as the valedictorian of the Archbishop Molloy class of 2018. And, I am so shocked at how fast our four years in high school have flown.

I remember that in the first edition of *The Stanner* I saw, there was a column entitled “Senior Year? But I Just Got Here.”

I, as a naive freshman, certainly did not think it would go by this quickly. Yet here we all are about to embark on the next stage of our journey.

That first day of school, nobody knew each other. We had different backgrounds, different stories. All we had to tie us together were our **uniforms**.

Over the next three years, quite a lot changed, but our uniforms did not.

We put on Molloy's colors every day, and that made us a group, and over three years Molloy made us a family.

We shared the joys of friendship at Esopus.

We shared the struggles of balancing school and sports and clubs and friends and everything else.

We shared the heart-stopping fear we experienced when a TA walked by us in the halls and we realized we'd forgotten our ID cards.

Then, this year, we got to wear the golf shirts, the ultimate sign of Stanner seniority and maturity.

We became CML's, club presidents, and team captains, and we began to look towards college and towards the future.

Today, that same group of young adults is here.

But, we no longer need **external uniforms** to tie us together.

What links us now is our core Stanner identity, something that will last long after we discard our uniforms and leave the halls of Molloy.

What links us now are the Marist values which forever distinguish us as faith-filled disciples, empowered witnesses, agents of service and justice, servant leaders, and spirit-filled members of our families and communities.

Next year, we will be freshmen again in a new place. But we will never leave the Molloy family, the group spanning students, faculty, and the thousands of alumni.

Our knowledge and experience make us Stanners forever, because Molloy truly lives up to its motto: *Non Scholae Sed Vitae*, Not For School But For Life.

Inside the classroom, we learned the **skills** we would need to **succeed**: work ethic, perseverance.

Outside the classroom, we learned the **values** we would need to **flourish**: empathy, compassion for one another.

Each one of us defines success differently.

But no matter what we want to achieve, the skills and values we have developed here will prepare us to take on any challenge life throws at us.

Today, we go out into the world.

We've got the tools we need, so now let's go and build something great!

It's very important that we take a moment to acknowledge and thank everybody who got us to this point.

First and foremost, our parents, and mine in particular, who've managed to deal with me for the last 18 years. Thank you so much for putting up with us through thick and thin, for supporting us during our highest points and lifting us up from our lowest points. No words can express our appreciation for everything you've done for us.

Secondly, we need to thank our family and friends, the people who always had our back.

Thank you also to the Archbishop Molloy faculty, the teachers, brothers, and counselors, who challenged us every day and pushed us to do our best and then do even better.

I'd like to thank my classmates for making these last four years amazing.

Finally, we must never forget to say thank you to God, because it is only by His grace that we are all gathered here today for this wonderful celebration. God has a plan for every one of us, and if we place our trust in Him, He will lead us all to do great things.

Dr. Seuss said "Don't cry because it's over. Smile because it happened."

Tears are shed today because it is a goodbye of sorts.

Obviously, we will not all be together next year; a new group of timid freshmen will put on the uniform for the first time, and a new group of Molloy seniors will don the golf shirts. But this doesn't mean our time as part of Molloy is over.

And that's why we should all smile, because we will never stop being Stanners.

We should smile knowing that we enter the world braced with the morals and values to make the world a better place.

We should smile knowing that the bonds of friendship that we forged here will last for years to come.

Thank you all for these amazing four years, and congratulations to the Archbishop Molloy Class of 2018!