Congratulations to each one of you. Hard work, discipline, intel and intelligence, teamwork, and the village got you here. Congrats for your perseverance, your fortitude, your stick-to-it-iveness, your never say die, Semper Fi approach.

Don’t know if you ever heard the story about the three fellows standing at a casket when the priest asks them “what do you hope people will say at your funeral.” The first one, Steve, says, I hope they will say that I “was a great business leader and helped provide jobs for many families.” The second fellow, Stan, said that I hope they will say I “was a good family man and I took care of those closest to me.” And finally the third one, we will call him Joe, he says I hope they say “look, he’s moving. He’s still alive!!!”

Well, after all the hard work to get to this day, you are all still moving, you’re still alive. Congratulations.

Congratulations also to your “village”—your teammates here in this room, your close friends not here today, and your families always with you in spirit. They helped get you to this point, and we thank them at the very same time that we congratulate you.

Someone once said that “if you don’t set any goals you can run up and down the field all your life and never score.” A goal is just a dream with a deadline.

The comedian Lily Tomlin likes to joke that she always wanted to “be somebody. But now I realize I should have been more specific.” Good for each one of you for being “specific.” You had dreams, you set deadlines and you reached your goals. Well done.

Don’t know if you heard about the little girl doing a drawing in her third grade classroom. The teacher leans over and asks what she is drawing. The child replies “God.” The teacher says “but no one knows what God looks like.” And the child replies, without missing a beat, “they will in a minute.”

“They will in a minute.” You gotta love that attitude, that confidence. I know it took you a lot longer than that. And I hope this latest confirmation of your hard work and intelligence gives you more confidence about your daily work and life. Maybe not as much as that third grader, but some anyway!!!
So, first of all, Congratulations.

Second, I want challenge you for just a couple of minutes. You live in the middle of two incredible paradigm shifts, shifts in the way we communicate, work, live and learn.

The first paradigm shift has to do with communications. In my day, communication WAS in person, one on one, and most likely verbal and vocal. Now, it IS almost never in person, rarely one on one (more likely shared with many), and only very rarely verbal and vocal.

We live in an era when “MySpace” is already old space, where “email” is the new “snail mail,” where the first association with the word “web” is not “spider”, and where a foreign government—Egypt’s, entrenched for 40 years—can be toppled by a thousand protesters armed with smart phones, Facebook accounts and a common cause. The keyboard—faster than the pen and still mightier than the sword. My goodness, if Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest country in the world.

These new forms of communication have allowed each of us to redefine ourselves in much more than simply a nationalistic sense. Bonds of friendship, commonality, and cause are forged, tested, and strengthened instantaneously across schools, communities, heck even across oceans and often without a single in-person encounter. And make no mistake, these developments in the technology of communications are like tectonic shifts under the very ground on which education rests—as NYU President John Sexton put it, “on the fields of knowledge creation and knowledge dissemination.”

In higher education today, we all come late to the party, trying to keep pace with developments we couldn’t even imagine—not just a generation ago—how about a year ago. I saw a video recently of a Good Samaritan somewhere in the Third World building a well by following the directions on his IPAD mounted on a dirt pile next to him. I saw a movie last year in Altoona where a teenager dialed up his blackberry to figure out how to pick a lock. The ripple effects of all these examples of “higher” education—how to peacefully overthrow a government, how to pick a lock, how to build a well—are not unrelated to what we do at Mt Aloysius every day and are directly related to what you must do to prepare your students for when they leave your school systems.

Paradigm shift number one—the very nature of interpersonal communications has changed, perhaps irrevocably.

Mom gets internet lesson with “Ask Jeeves”—he can tell you anything... Ask him a question. 76 year-old mom asks, “How is Aunt Helen feeling today?” So they are omnipresent but not omniscient, but ignore these new communication systems at your peril, because you will need them to deal with Paradigm shift 2...]

The second paradigm shift has to do with the status of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning was a buzz phrase twenty years ago—something to aspire towards. Now, it is no longer the prerogative of the educated few, lifelong learning is now the mandate for all who wish to get a better job, or just keep the one they have.
You know, 43% of our students at Mt Aloysius are in nursing or allied health fields. I want to ask each of you to think about the last time you went to the hospital. Did you see anyone carrying a chart or putting one in a slot at the bottom of your bed? Probably not, because as soon as the doctor or the nurse or the surg tech or the medical assistant finished treating you, they turned around to a laptop device mounted on the wall in your room or the hallway, and recorded their comments through a software program that will share them hospital-wide and add them instantly to your permanent record. Welcome to the 21st century in the hospital and at Mt Aloysius. And that particular transition—from unreadable doctor prose to legible, transparent, instantly messengered diagnoses and treatment plans—happened like that (snaps fingers).

Did you know that the majority of the jobs that will be filled by today’s elementary school students don’t even exist today? How will those kids or our students prepare for such change? Whether they are going to work running operations for the Sheetz Corporation, work in a manufacturing operation like the McLanahan Corporation, take over as warden at the federal prison in Cresson, run a nursing division at Altoona Regional Health Systems, or serve as rehab specialist at the Hiram G. Andrews Center, our graduates will have to “know how to know,” as former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich puts it. We understand that their experience at Mt Aloysius must be the lynchpin for lifelong learning—so they can keep pace in their first professions, and prepare for whole new ones.

[At MAC, almost everything we do available on line...talk about blended etc.]

Third, I want to thank you. Two gifts. First gift is from Noah, yeah, the one with the ark in the bible. When the going gets tough out there, and it will on occasion—remember these lessons from Noah’s incredible odyssey.

“Don’t miss the boat.
Remember that we are all in the same boat.
Plan ahead. It wasn’t raining when Noah built the ark.
Stay fit. When you are 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
Don’t listen to critics, just get on with the job that needs to be done.
Build your future on high ground.
For safety’s sake, travel in pairs.
Speed isn’t always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
When you’re stressed, float for awhile.
Remember the ark was built by amateurs, the Titanic by professionals.
No matter the storm, when you are with God, there’s always a rainbow waiting.”

Second gift, a bit more personal. Same gift I gave to our graduates last weekend. And today is another commencement of sorts, a sort of moving on. Time to take stock. Big bits of wisdom—don’t have them but do have one thing I know is true. Real simple. As you take on next steps in your work life, your family life and your community life.
Every now and then take a long look at something not made by a machine—a mountain, a star, the turn of a stream, a child. You will achieve wisdom and patience in those moments, and will know then that you are never alone.

So enjoy the little things—your crazy neighbors, a favorite swing set, pulled pork, a baseball game, whatever because someday you will look back and realize they were the big things.

Make sense? Okay. And always remember on your longest day that the shortest prayer is only two words—thank you.