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INTEGRITAS

Wyoming Catholic College

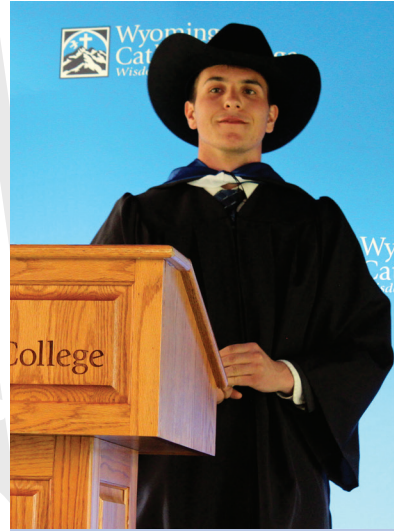
2020 Senior Address

by Miguel Fiandeiro

Chairman Kellogg, President Arbery, Dean Washut, friends and family of Wyoming Catholic College, and most importantly, Class of 2020:

It was precisely seventy days ago when we were told that classes were canceled, outdoor trips were postponed, and that we were headed home. Two days later, we spread out across the nation, and, by no fault of its own, a school premised on a "No-Technology Policy," an outdoor curriculum, and a tight-knit community, was now teaching its students, who were isolated at home, using only technology to communicate. While we may never forget the great times of trying to keep up with our Populi discussions, constantly smashing the refresh button as our siblings cried in the background of our Zoom classes, these times were just a small portion of our Wyoming Catholic College experience. So, for once, let's put the coronavirus aside and talk about something else. Let's go back to the very beginning.

Four years ago, we stumbled into the backcountry where we spent the next twenty-one days climbing mountains and singing so loudly and obnoxiously, we could have slept in a bear den without knowing it. We watched meteorites and lightning light up the sky. We cooked the best of meals and we cooked the worst of meals. And who could forget that we met a park ranger by the name of Priscilla? When we emerged twenty-one



Wyoming Catholic College's 2020 graduating class chose Miguel Fiandeiro of San Jose, California, to deliver the Senior Address, a formal farewell to the College community.

days later, like the Israelites longing for the onions and fleshpots of Lander, we were no longer stumbling about, but we had a goal. We were no longer strangers to one another, but we were friends. This was just the beginning. Fresh out of the backcountry we soon found ourselves in Dr. Bolin's Philosophy 101 class. Young and bright eyed, we began our search for the

"We were no longer strangers to one another, but we were friends."

answers to the eternal questions. It was here that we picked up the logical tools and the philosophical first premises that would guide us over our next four years. Amid the sea of Aristotelian distinctions and platonic forms, there was one moment that stood out in particular.

At the end of one of our classes, early in the semester, the conversation lulled, and, as usual, we turned to Dr. Bolin for inspiration. We didn't

know it yet, but we were in for the first of many "functional human being talks." These functional human being talks – which later progressed into grumpy monologues (self-proclaimed, by the way) – gave us time to step back from the nuanced texts that we were reading and to talk about the broader implication and importance of philosophy. From topics such as cognition bias to friendship to smoking, these discussions provided some great insights over our four years, but there was one which stood out in particular. Amid the lull, perched upon the table, both legs swinging, and head ever so slightly tilted, Dr. Bolin wore a mischievous grin. And then he said, "The thing that differentiates the liberal arts education from your standard four-year education is that the liberal arts education is absolutely useless." My heart stopped. Why does this man seem so happy about that? I had just spent the last four months of my life trying to convince my family and friends that this wasn't the case. But, thankfully, he didn't end there. Dr. Bolin went on to explain that our liberal arts education is useless because it is not done for something else. We don't study the liberal arts to own a Lamborghini, or for glory, or for fame, or for a nice house. We do it because it is beautiful and good in itself. It's useless in the way that watching the sun rise is useless, or in the way that spending time with family or friends is useless. It's useless because you're not doing it for anything else. This, to me, was a beautiful claim and the next few years would prove it. What a journey they turned out to be.

We rapidly moved from criticizing everyone

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who wasn't St. Thomas Aquinas to being able to enter into an academic friendship with some of the greatest minds of the Western tradition. In reading authors like Machiavelli, Locke, and Aristotle, it was never only about what some Italian or Greek thought hundreds or thousands of years ago. It was about the insights they provided which are just as true today as in their own time. It was about learning their ideas, how they formulated society, and how they continue to form who we are—whether or not we know it. In a way, our education here has brought us closer to fulfilling the Delphic injunction to “know thyself.” At times, the journey could not have been sweeter: the moments of insight in class, the late nights around the campfire, the early morning runs in Sinks Canyon when we would race to beat the sun up the slopes, or the practicums, the dances, and the dorm life. It was about experiencing the beauty of God's creation first hand rather than through a postcard, about finding one's place in salvation history rather than just listening to the rules that the Catechism sets out for you, and about being able to pick up a poem and read it and understand it without depending on SparkNotes or someone else tell you what it means.

***“What now?
We've been
given this
gift, but
what do
we do
with it?”***

But there were also times when the road was long and rocky, when the pain of being dragged out of the cave was palpable, and when the answers simply didn't add up. But we knew these times were necessary because this education was never about the easy answers. If it was, then we probably did waste four years of our lives because Google and SparkNotes already exist.

There were times when it seemed like the journey would never end. But now it has really come to a close. One question remains: What now? We've been given this gift, but what do we do with it? Was it four years of studying the good, true, and beautiful to simply forget about it all as we go on to become lawyers, doctors, fathers, mothers, teachers, or whatever we go on to become? Surely not. Rather, as Dr. Bolin so beautifully put it, since the liberal arts are pursued for themselves, in whatever way we were wounded by beauty, either by the splendor of the outdoors, or by a particular philosophy or theology, then we will surely continue to study these things after we leave Lander, taking with us the habits we have formed here. For if the questions were ever worth pursuing before or at Wyoming Catholic College, they will continue to be worth pursuing long after we leave this place.

But to say that these four years were simply the beginning of a journey is

not enough, because it fails to acknowledge the distinctiveness of our time at Wyoming Catholic College and all our four years of doing nothing other than pursuing the good, true and beautiful.

So, I turn to *The Brothers Karamazov* for some aid. In Dostoevsky's novel, Father Zosima imparts a teaching on memories. He explains that memories are not just images of the past, something we look to in order to remember the good old days. Rather, they are eternally present to us and eternally ready to be drawn upon for inspiration, for insight, and motivation; they are eternally forming who we are. So it is with our memories of Wyoming Catholic College. All the books that we have read together here will always be with us and present to us. We are entering a world which has never valued isolation more than it does today.

"...we're entering a world that is charged with the grandeur of God."

It is a world that hungers for meaning, for purpose, for a cause to fight for, for a friend to lean on, for a reason to live. It is a world where profit is king and virtue is weakness and where the best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity. It is a world that is too much with us. But in spite of – and far more important than – any of that, we're entering a world that is charged with the grandeur of God. We've been given four years to be a witness to that fact and now it is our job to continue to bear witness to it after we have left. When we leave this refuge, we will take these memories and these habits of learning, this pursuit for the good and the beautiful, and we will bring it with us to do whatever we go on to do. In the words of T.S. Eliot,

*Fare forward, travelers! Not escaping from the past
Into indifferent lives, or into any future;
You are not the same people who left that station
Or who will arrive at any terminus,
While the narrowing rails slide together behind you;
And on the deck of the drumming liner
Watching the furrow that widens behind you,
You shall not think 'the past is finished'
Or 'the future is before us'.*

So, Class of 2020, when we leave this place, it is not 'fare thee well', but 'fare thee forward'. Thank you. †

Matriculation Remarks

by Glenn Arbery, Ph.D.

Reverend Fathers, Chairman Kellogg, Director Sniffin, members of the faculty and staff, families, friends, returning students, and incoming freshmen of Wyoming Catholic College:

This moment in our history seems destined to be a memorable one. Smoke from the massive wildfires in California and Colorado hangs over the landscape almost as a natural symbol. The threat of the coronavirus pandemic occupies the daily news long after we thought it would have begun to fade, and many—perhaps most—schools across the country have decided not to open in person. Online classes, which we had to try ourselves back in the spring, have become the mode of education. Political uncertainties abound,

“This year, the usual becomes the exceptional, the familiar becomes the unfamiliar.”

and in some cities lawlessness and violence take place with apparent official sponsorship, as though the institutions that reflect hard-earned wisdom and the blessings of good order had been disavowed and cancelled.

Yet all these things, ominous at they seem, point to the singularity of this day. This is and is not the familiar scene of going off to college and starting an academic career. This year, the usual becomes the exceptional, the familiar becomes the unfamiliar.



Dr. Arbery was born in South Carolina and grew up as a Protestant in Middle Georgia. A convert at 25, he entered the Church at the University of Dallas, where he later took his Ph.D. Prior to coming to Wyoming Catholic, he taught literature at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in Merrimack, New Hampshire, the University of Dallas, and Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he held the d’Alzon Chair of Liberal Education.

Old things can be seen in a new light, stripped of their clichés and appreciated again for what they are and what they mean. Our presence today as a community is wonderful, and the arrival, in person, in these times, of the largest freshman class in the history of the College is a testimony of hope.

You freshmen have just completed an experience that you will remember for the rest of your lives. That sounds like a truism, but in fact, very few things that you undergo are truly transformative, and you will find that this is one of them. I suspect that it will take years—perhaps many years—for you to understand how this experience of yourself and a small community of others has affected your sense of boundaries and horizons. I suspect that you have made friendships on a deeper basis than any you have experienced before. Already, you have taken on a great challenge, and you have behind you, as you start classes this week, a complex accomplishment that will become the basis of the skills you will need for further trips, yes, but also the basis of participation in the intellectual challenges and the greatness of imagination that characterize our curriculum.

My wife and I knew a great man named Donald Cowan who used to say that learning requires long labors, but that you can keep going if you just get a little glimpse of Beatrice. For those of you who already know Dante's *Commedia*, the allusion to Dante's beloved requires no explanation. For those who have the pleasure of that poem still ahead, he means that a foretaste of the rewards of blessedness, a real experience, however brief, of the heights for which one strives, makes the rigors of the journey bearable. You freshmen have the mountaintops already; you have seen the brilliance

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of the stars from the mountains on a moonless night; you have had a glimpse of Beatrice, and what awaits you is more difficult and still more rewarding.

The community that you enter today is the larger one of Wyoming Catholic College, where every other student shares the common

experience of this beginning and a common curriculum. When you read the *Iliad* or the book of Genesis this semester, you will come to realize that everyone else in the College either is reading those works or has read them

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and talked through them before. The bonds you have formed within your WCCL will broaden into other friendships. Your love of God, nourished by the wilderness, will find forms of expression in Mass, in Divine Liturgy, in adoration, so that you can deepen in your love of Christ and Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom.

This ceremony today is your formal entrance into the life of this unique college. In a few moments, you will come forward, one by one, to enter your names into the *matricula*, the register, which holds in it the signatures of everyone who ever came to Wyoming Catholic College. You might take a moment to think what that means. With this gesture, you will join the meaning of your life to the meaning of this College, in this crucial moment in the world, and you will become a participant in the work we undertake to understand together and to act in charity, with His grace, to bring about those things to which God has called us. †

“...you will become a participant in the work we undertake to understand together and to act in charity, with His grace, to bring about those things to which God has called us.”

KNOW A YOUNG PERSON WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM A WYOMING CATHOLIC COLLEGE EDUCATION?

Spirit



95 to 1
Student to Priest Ratio



Two-thirds of Students
attend Daily Mass



5% of Students
go on to Religious Orders and seminary



Daily Mass & Confession
by Roman Catholic and Byzantine Chaplains

Body



21 Day Freshman Orientation
in the Mountains



Horsemanship Program
during your sophomore year



Two-thirds of Students
participate in intramural sports



14 Days Each Year
spent in the Wyoming backcountry

Mind



11 to 1
Student to Professor Ratio



Thriving Great Books Curriculum
focused on developing the whole person



Zero Teaching Assistants
at WCC; all classes taught by professors



1 to 1
Student to Professor Thesis Advisor Ratio

**Please contact our admissions office
at 877-332-2930 to learn more**