

Grace Tomasko

The Only Certainties in Life are Death, Taxes, and the Long Blue Line

Good afternoon and welcome all graduates, faculty, staff, friends, and family. I'm glad you could all be here for a momentous occasion. Throughout my young adult life, I've often heard my dad say to prepare me for full adulthood that "the only two certainties in life are death and taxes." It wasn't until recently I learned that statement doesn't originally come from my dad. But, instead from Benjamin Franklin, a pioneer in his own right. While I agree with both my dad and Benjamin Franklin that death and taxes are inescapable in our lives, I must say there is another certainty in life: change.

The beauty of life is that change is inevitable. Over winter break, I went on a family trip to Niagara Falls for the first time. I've always loved nature and felt a special connection to the falls upon arrival. It wasn't until a couple days later, I realized why. Our entire education we've been on a smooth river. Maybe there were storms along the way with high tides and low tides. Then, a virus infected the river halfway through our sophomore year and it still hasn't fully recovered. But, smooth overall. Then, we get to senior year and we know what's to come. Everything is speeding up, no stopping, and the white-water rapids start to form. All of a sudden we're pulled into the riptide and there's no escaping the inevitability of the fall. We don't know what's going to happen next and there's so much unknown. But what is for certain is we can't go back to that same smooth river. As soon as we've finished here today, we'll go over that waterfall. Some of us are scared of heights and can't help but scream and some of us like the sensation of falling and decide to embrace it. Either way, we'll eventually come back up from the fall and suddenly it's a smooth river again. But, it's not the same river as before. We may not

know when the river will be smooth again but we know we'll reach that point eventually. Right now, we just have to embrace the fall.

All this to say, change can definitely be scary and sad. But there's also something thrilling and exciting about taking that next step. It's a bittersweet feeling. We're moving on to the next phase of our lives which means we need to say goodbye. Maybe we're saying goodbye to a favorite faculty member or friends we're not sure if or when we'll see again. But, we also need to say goodbye to the part of ourselves that we're leaving in the past because we are losing a part of ourselves in the process of this life change. In a way, we need to grieve that part of ourselves in addition to the time we've shared here. Unfortunately, there were unforeseen circumstances such as the pandemic that I don't think anyone will miss about our time here at Marietta. But, there was also a final four basketball championship, formals, concerts, road trips with friends, coaches, and faculty, and maybe even late night trips to Taco Bell. Life is about being able to take the bad stuff with the good so that way we can recognize and appreciate how genuine the good stuff is. Then, we take those memories with us as we blaze a new trail and join the long blue line. There's still so much to do and see outside of Marietta which is what makes life all the more exciting.

I've realized how much I've changed and grown during my four years here and I am forever grateful to Marietta College for that. I urge everyone here, but especially the graduates, to reflect on the last four years as well. How have you changed and grown since freshman year? Are you proud of the person you've become? And what lessons and memories can you take with you as you evolve into a new stage in your life? I promise we all have something new to offer this world. We just have to find it and make the life we lead worthwhile. Embrace the fall, embrace the change. But just know, we still have death and taxes to look forward to and not

necessarily in that order. I'll leave you with another important lesson I learned from my dad: "If everything went right, there wouldn't be any stories to tell." Congratulations Class of 2022! I'll see you on the other side of the falls. Thank you.