

## **Jack Ensminger's Welcome Address for Class of 2021 Commencement (June 6, 2021)**

Greetings, students, parents, extended family and friends. Welcome to the Class of 2021 Commencement celebration!!

We're here! Today is the day. We embarked on our journey at Jesuit just 1,377 days ago, and today we will be putting our journey to a close. I came into Jesuit rather unknowing what to expect. I heard so much about the typical "Jesuit experience" and learned quickly from upperclassmen about what my next four years should look and feel like.

Looking back on our four years here, I can wholeheartedly say that we have had the most unorthodox Jesuit experience in the history of the school. Not being together for such a long time was definitely not expected, but what we did as a class then is why I am proud to say that I am going to be a part of the Jesuit graduating class of 2021 forever.

Not only did we help our neighbors and open ourselves up to the community outside of Jesuit through stewardship and service, but we more importantly, we continued to open ourselves up to our own community.

During a time where it would've been easy to turn our backs on each other and our school, we didn't. No one asked for a year full of cancellations, awkward elbow bumps, and isolating breakout rooms, but we have responded through all of this.

Even through all of this unfamiliarity, this year has also been a year of finding new ways to stay in touch, getting to know each other in deeper ways, and building our class's culture inside in outside the halls of Jesuit. Our class is special. In a way, we wrote our own "Jesuit experience."

As someone pointed out to me recently, our Jesuit experience was in a metaphorical way, a lot like when Sader nation was played during prom a few weeks ago. If you weren't there, I will set a little bit of context for this.

The catchy "aye, green and gold till I die" intro boomed through the speakers and nearly every student there poured out onto this very field in a way that I haven't seen since Freshman Fun Night.

Hearing the now infamous opening lyrics really showed the essence of the buy-in to the community that many of us had to make during our earlier years of school. In this example, though, Mr. Maxie is COVID (sorry, Mr. Maxie!).

When the music was cut to a halt and Mr. Maxie told the moshing pit of senior boys to not \*airquotes\* "Rub your bodies all up over each other," it was actually a good representation of when we were all split up last March.

This past year, we had many opportunities to let our community and Jesuit experience come to a halt, to tune each other out and let the music lay flat, but like we did at the Prom, we kept singing, and we sung LOUD. When things got hard, we embraced each other and built the community for ourselves.

If anything comes from our high school experience, we have learned lessons in adaptability, resilience, and faith, and will be able to apply them to wherever we go in the future.

Within the past year, all three of these values have allowed us to come back together, reconnect with each other, and make the most out of our last few months of high school.

We've adapted to our surroundings, been resilient in our actions and spirit, and kept faith in our beliefs and commitment to a Jesuit education. In all aspects of life, we are strong and we are fighters.

I would be crazy to think that we won't get knocked down a couple times these next few years, but the lessons we have learned together and who we are as people will take us far in life.

As Winston Churchill said, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

I am excited for what the future holds in store for us. In just a few months, we are going to leave our families behind and start off in a new life on our own.

While this is scary, a strong phrase to take away from Jesuit is one from the freshman overnight: "Courage, then courage." We have made the courageous decision to show up for ourselves and then to show up again for our brothers and sisters.

The spirit and courage of each and every one of us here is why we are here today and why we will find success in the future.

Congratulations, Class of 2021. I am so appreciative of the time we have had together and am excited to move on as a class into the future. I am excited to say that in just two hours, we will be Jesuit High School graduates!

Thank you.