

Shibangi Saha – Valedictorian Remarks - June 4th, 2016
Archbishop Molloy High School – Class of 2016

Good morning.

Mr. Karsten, Mr. Penikas, faculty, parents and family, and my classmates.

Congratulations!

My heartiest wishes go out to all the proud parents and family members, esteemed teachers and faculty, and spectacular Archbishop Molloy Class of 2016.

What can I possibly say that justly describes our journey together as classmates?
What advice or thoughts can I offer to such a talented group of individuals who have survived so much, and emerged from every obstacle stronger and wiser?

Today we celebrate the constant perseverance and determination that got us to this point,
and will carry us for the rest of our lives.

I am sharing my story with you to offer hope and strength for your new lives.

Today we thank everyone who helped to get us here-
parents who sacrificed again and again to make our lives better;
teachers who helped us understand what we learned was truly “Not for school, but for life;”
friends who stood by our side in the best and worst of times, making our days a little brighter with a simple smile.

Today we reflect on the end of our lives at Molloy and our new beginnings all over the world.

Our lives have not always been sunshine and smiles. I am a living witness to that fact.

Every so often, the tectonic plates of our lives shifted.
Our worlds shook, and we were left in uncomfortable shoes of grief and loss.
Some of these shifts were only tremors- like that one lost game, that failed test, or that friendship that faded.

Some of the shifts were major earthquakes: homes devastated from Hurricane Sandy, rejection from dream colleges, getting accepted to dream colleges but not being able to attend because of financial difficulties, losing close loved ones.

In the summer before my sophomore year, I lost my mother. It was literally falling asleep like any normal night and waking up the next morning with my mother’s

corpse lying next to me. In one night, my whole life changed. I had lost my identity as a daughter and had no one to call “mom.”

My mother’s death changed me in profound ways. I learned about the brutality and depths of grief and loss. I learned that “tomorrow” is never certain. I also learned that when everything in your world seems to fall on you, you can emerge from under the rubble and breathe again. I am sharing my story with you to offer hope and strength for your new life. We can choose to think and understand why things happened the way they did.

Thankfully, many may not relate to my story, but more do than I ever thought. I have learned this along my journey. We often can’t tell the story behind the smiles we see in the crowded hallways.

I know Stanners who have lost both parents, fully losing the identities of “son” and “daughter.”

I know Stanners who had their houses and lives devastated by Hurricane Sandy, losing their “home.”

I know Stanners who have been rejected by all the colleges they’ve ever wanted to attend, losing dreams and hope.

All these stories are plastered up behind the everyday smiles.

Could you tell?

The bitter truth of life is that things do go wrong. Losses of opportunity, dreams, hope, and even, life.

What happens next?

We must overcome the adversity, no matter when or how it hits.

Those hard times determine and fortify who we are.

In the long run, we will be defined - not just by our achievements, but more by how we survived the “earthquakes” of our lives.

Class of 2016, we have so much to look forward to in life.

We have incredible talents, which we are taking all over the world.

Our possibilities are endless.

And, then, when that tectonic challenge comes, we will remember to step back and believe in our resilience.

We have survived and won before.

We will win again.

Thank you very much.