



My sincere congratulations to our graduates, to their families and friends.

Thank you to the faculty and staff for another excellent academic year. Well done!

We ALL celebrate our students' graduations.

Welcome, everyone, to Caldwell University, your university

Students, this has been your academic home for the past several years

Soon, it will be your alma mater for the rest of your lives

Your university . . . the embodiment of Mother Joseph's dream and reality since 1939 for a Catholic and Dominican college,

One of the best Catholic universities in our part of the world

Students came here to learn, become educated people, and make a difference upon graduation.

It is our mission as a Catholic and Dominican University to:

- Promote intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic growth
- Welcome all cultures and faith traditions.
- Transform students' lives.

Every graduate of the Class of 2026 is expected to follow the lead of the tens of thousands of Caldwell alumni who preceded you by not only doing well, but also by doing good, as well as remaining faithful to the enduring values you learned here.

Respect, Integrity, Community, and Excellence

These are not just words for Caldwell University . . . or for you as graduates . . .

We also want you to know how proud we are of you.

We know well what you have accomplished, what you contributed, and what you sacrificed.

During these challenging times in our country and the world,
We support you.

We believe in you and encourage you to believe in yourselves and your ability to make a positive difference for yourselves, your families, and broader communities.

Today is a threshold.

You stand between what has shaped you and what you will shape next.

It's a moment full of pride, uncertainty, and possibility.

If there is one word I hope you carry forward from this day, it is this:

BELIEVE.

Believing is not a vague wish, but a deliberate choice.

Belief is often misunderstood as something soft or passive.

It isn't.

Belief is an act of courage.

It's what you choose when the outcome isn't guaranteed,

when the path isn't clear,

when doubt feels louder than hope.

You've already practiced belief more than you realize.

Every late night, every failed attempt, every time you kept going when quitting would have been easier

—you believed.

Not necessarily that success was certain, but that effort was worthwhile.

The writer and poet Amanda Gorman once wrote,

“Optimism is not the absence of fear,

but the presence of hope.

IT IS A BELIEF.

Notice that she doesn't say optimism is fearless, nor does it guarantee achievement.

But belief leads to it.

Belief doesn't replace hard work; it fuels it.

As you leave this place, you'll encounter a world that often rewards certainty and punishes hesitation.

But here's the truth:

no meaningful path begins with certainty.

It begins with belief.

Belief in your ability to grow.

Belief in your right to achieve.

Belief that failure is not an identity, but a step.

There will be moments when belief feels difficult—when rejection emails pile up, when plans fall apart, when others seem to move ahead faster than you.

In those moments, remember the words of Cheryl Strayed, author of the *Wild*:

"Believe in the truth of your own capacity.

You are not a traveler in a land that does not belong to you;

you are the architect of the terrain you are walking on."

In other words, belief in oneself is a prerequisite

and within your power to have and to hold.

The rest still requires persistence, humility, and resilience.

But belief gets you moving—and motion is everything.

Belief also extends beyond yourself.

Believe in others.

Believe in ideas not yet proven.

Believe in solutions that don't yet exist.

Believe . . . in audacity.

The best-selling author Sarah Maas calls us to engage in audacious dreaming

“The world will be saved and remade by dreamers . . . you could do anything, if only you dared.”

That “why not” is where progress lives.

It's where innovation begins.

It's where you and your belief come in.

Your generation faces complex, deeply interconnected challenges.

But complexity is not a signal to step back

—it's an invitation to step in.

To question. To build. To imagine differently.

And here's something equally important:

belief is not about never doubting yourself.

It's about not letting doubt make your decisions for you.

You can believe and still feel afraid.

You can believe and still fail.

You can believe and still not have all the answers.

Belief doesn't require perfection. It requires commitment.

So as you leave here today, don't just celebrate what you've achieved—decide what you will believe in next.

Believe in your capacity to adapt when plans change.

Believe in your responsibility to contribute, not just consume.

Believe that your voice matters, especially when it feels small.

And perhaps most importantly, believe that this moment is not a conclusion—it's a

beginning.

The world you're entering doesn't need more certainty.

It needs more people willing to believe—and then act on that belief with integrity, curiosity, and courage.

Remember the writing of Mark in the Bible when he wrote that Jesus said:

“Everything is possible for one who believes!”

Congratulations, Class of 2026. Go forward—and believe.

May God continue to bless you!