

Keynote Alumna Speech – Mother Daughter Brunch

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May 30, 2025

Greetings. It is a blessing to be here with you today.

We are all related to Oakcrest in some way. Whether you are an alumna, daughter of an alumna, mother, grandmother, or current – soon to be graduated – senior, we have all come to know and love Oakcrest, and will keep reaping the benefits from our experience with her in the years to come.

But *the* relationship that unites us to Oakcrest and gives life to the school itself is that we are all Children of the Light and Daughters of the Day.

This phrase – Daughters of the Day – has fixed itself in my imagination. My sister – an Oakcrest alumna from the class of '24 – and I have been reading the Epistles together over the last couple months. It feels as if St. Paul is now our dear friend, and while he exhorts the Thessalonians, I fancifully picture him addressing us, saying, “But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or darkness.” Paul again tells us firmly that “we belong to the day.”

Christ is our Light and our Day, and we belong to him. I am so grateful for my relationship with Oakcrest – as a student and now as an alumna – because first, Oakcrest affirms and speaks this truth over her students, second, she unites us in this truth, and third, she prepares and guides us to meet a world of darkness in need of light – holy, beautiful, and joyous light. Such preparation is a life-long gift that goes far beyond my four highschool years here.

I came to Oakcrest in ninth grade in the Fall of 2016, slightly scared and overwhelmed. I went from a class of two to forty (Google’s AI Overview told me that’s a 1,900% increase). But my parents were intent upon a school that practiced what they preached, valued the Great Books and Liberal Arts, and had a lively faith and community. Hence, my devoted mother drove me to school every morning from Alexandria; and after my sister started at Oakcrest the year I graduated, my mother boasts a grand total of eight straight years every morning on 395 to 495 to the Dulles Toll Road and back again during rush hour. Thank you mom.

My time at Oakcrest was rightfully intense, like any high school in this area. The competitive chaos of sports, shows, academics, and college prep often felt like I was in a

pressure cooker, but the perceptive teachers here cut through the commotion and kept affirming what was true, that we were Children of Light, Daughters of the Day. They did this through how they treated us in and out of the classrooms. My fondest memories are the thoughtful conversations we had with them. They sought our opinions and valued our thoughts. I had so many questions about Christ and Catholicism, life and literature, and they were taken seriously, and answered lovingly. The teachers at Oakcrest helped me be a whole-hearted thinker by tending to my soul, and I would not be the same person without such consistent attentiveness.

But what does it look like to be an alumna, not participating in the ins and outs of Oakcrest every day? Well, the fantastic part of having such a tangible and supportive community like Oakcrest (and being a Christian in general), is that we recognize that we are never alone in our individual call to serve Christ and his world. Wherever we are in our adventures, we have memories with and prayers of a community that believes in a living God. Which is wild. And as I'm obsessed with 1st Thessalonians at the moment, I'll share another startling line from Paul about the wonders of spiritual friendship when we are separated by time and space. He writes to the church of Thessalonica, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? Yes, you are our glory and joy!" Because of Oakcrest and all her teaching, advising, and nurturing, we may say *these things* about each other in the years to come. Which indeed, to me, seems a great joy.

My appreciation for Oakcrest and her teachers and her culture keeps growing as I enter post-grad young adulthood. The no-phones and skirt-length rules make sense now, and – hot take – life is actually a lot better when someone is forcing you to memorize poetry. Daily mass, reading during enrichment, built-in mentorship were all simply given to me at Oakcrest and now I struggle (against our culture and my own bad habits) to give *them* a place in my schedule. No longer can the True, Good, and Beautiful be taken for granted; now they must be fought for.

This is not to say the world is bad and goodness is found only under the shadow of Mount Oakcrest. My point is that Oakcrest had the foresight to prepare us for a world always in need of light. We are not only Daughters of the Day, but Daughters *for this* Day. We are called to the world's needs, its desperate need for Truth, Goodness, and Beauty, and because we are Oakcrest alumna, we have what it takes to come to the aid of our families and communities, and be the light of Christ.

What does a "Daughter of the Day" and a "Daughter *for this* Day" really mean? Paul's instructions are a good place to start. He says "since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of

salvation.” The beautiful thing is that I believe this will look different for each of us, with all our distinct gifts and passions and interests.

You can probably tell from my speech that I like adventure. I think in terms of “outward-bound callings” and “preparation for the wide world.” I’m still not exactly sure what God is doing with my desire for newness and boldness, but I’ve got to see his love work through my life in the past five years since I’ve graduated from Oakcrest, and it has been a delight.

I went to undergrad at Hillsdale College in southern Michigan, and there, which then felt far from home, I learned about friendship, dependency, and God’s always extending grace, on top of a degree in English. I spent several summers working at a dude ranch in Colorado, and there I felt the importance of service and hard work. I spent a summer studying at Oxford, and will never forget a 3am conversation with my agnostic flat-mate about purpose, God, and love; hopefully she won’t forget either. And, as I head to graduate school at St Andrews this Fall, I pray that the Lord will give me insight into his world and his truth, and help me better articulate our need for his Beauty. All of these happenings pull me far away from Virginia and Oakcrest, but it is because of my friends and family and education that I’ve been able to dream big and take risks. I am so grateful for the encouragement and faith they’ve all had in me along the way.

To be a Daughter of the Day and an Oakie is a double blessing. To have Christ’s love affirmed at every school I’ve been to blows my mind. It is a privilege few children have, anywhere in the world. It makes me pause and think, how am I to give back? What am I called for?

What I do know is that Oakcrest has prepared me for a world of darkness that needs the light of the Truth. I’m very blessed to be united in Christ’s love with Oakcrest and her community for the rest of my life, and to be a Daughter of the Day for *this day* with you all.