



## A brief reflection on the Grad-at-Grad

*When we were sitting in, it was love in action. When we went on the freedom ride, it was love in action. The march from Selma to Montgomery was love in action. We do it not simply because it's the right thing to do, but it's love in action. That we love our country, we love a democratic society, and so we have to move our feet.*

—John Lewis  
Freedom Rider and U.S. Representative

These words by one of the great leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, who passed away on July 17, 2020, are a good example of what it means to be fully human and fully alive to what we may become in our struggle for justice and equality. The “love in action” that John Lewis speaks of is in the context of the great struggles, the nonviolent struggles, against racial and social injustice that helped shape America. That struggle is far from over, as the recent Black Lives Matter protests make only too clear. Lewis’s words, and the context we find ourselves in, are also a good segway into the topic of the Grad-at-Grad for our BJP graduates. The love that Lewis speaks of is one of the core attributes of a Jesuit institution’s Grad-at-Grad.

Students of Jesuit education are introduced to the Graduate at Graduation, or Grad-at-Grad, early on. This set of attributes that we hope students have developed during their time with us presents a profile for what we wish our graduates to embody after their graduation and carry forth for the rest of their lives. We believe that they provide a foundation and context for personal development that will allow our graduates to help build a more just and loving world, the kind of world John Lewis envisioned and made real not just for himself, but for all people.

Upon graduation, the graduate of a Jesuit institution should be:

- Open to growth
- Intellectually competent
- Religious
- Loving
- Committed to doing justice

Each of these attributes and their description is well known to BJP students. Each of them is like a facet of the precious jewel that is the Kingdom of God our Lord came to preach and model for all of us. We make the world a more just and loving place when we can personally embody these goals and make them a reality for our greatly-divided country.

What I would like to emphasize with regard to these goals of the Grad-at-Grad is their interconnectedness- how they work together. They are not just a set of bullet points on a to-do list or agenda. On the contrary, each one influences the others, and each of them depends on how the others are lived. For instance, you cannot be open to growth if you are not intellectually



competent. You can't be open to growth if you aren't intellectually competent enough to know what you don't know! To be intellectually competent means you have developed your ability to think critically not only about your studies, but also about the world and about yourself. We not only need knowledge as we aspire to shape our individual careers, but also a desire, a holy desire, as St. Ignatius would say, to make the glory of God evident in a world still mired in injustice and inequality. As a Jesuit institution, we can't just teach academic subjects (though they are important!); we are called to develop our sense of our own competence and compassion, of commitment to God and to our conscience. Our society badly needs leaders who embody these attributes.

And what does it mean to be religious if we are not committed to taking care of our neighbors in our commitment to doing justice? To be religious is not about having certain pious feelings, but ensuring that the poor and the oppressed among us have a voice and a presence since they and we are made in the same image of God. We cannot separate being religious from doing justice. Without doing what is right, our religion would become shallow and hypocritical.

There are many more vital relationships between each of the attributes of the Grad-at-Grad. I invite you, graduates, to explore these connections, not just now before graduation day, but in your high-school, college years, and beyond. It will enrich your lives and truly make you women and men for others at the service of our God whom we see in our brothers and sisters and our world.

I wish you God's peace on that holy journey, much joy, and a life as rich in mercy and love as our God intended us to have. Congratulations on your graduation! We are very proud of you.

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