

Good afternoon families, friends, and the BJP Class of 2020. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Deina Felix, and I am a graduate of the BJP Class of 2015. I graduated from Notre Dame School in 2019, and just recently completed my first year of college at New York University.

The class of 2020 is graduating in a time that is unlike anything anyone in this room has ever experienced, with the most unideal circumstances and some incredibly challenging obstacles. Being in New York City, we lived in the epicenter of a global pandemic, forced to adapt to distance learning and unusual safety guidelines, but you were all able to rise to the moment and engage in remote learning. You were also able to witness history being made through the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement, and many of you participated and supported this movement while also maintaining social distance guidelines to protect your loved ones. And despite all the unexpected and rapid changes in the world,

you were able to successfully complete your final year at BJP, and for that, I commend you.

Being here with you all today in this church reminds me of my own time at BJP and how it impacted my high school career and my perspective on life. I started BJP in 5th grade. During my first week, I remember being so nervous because I had never heard of a school like BJP before. What other school has the girls and boys take classes separately, or takes their students to a summer camp in Connecticut? I was scared to start at a new school, but all my doubts quickly went away. I can confidently say that going to BJP was one of the best decisions of my life. For the first time, I felt challenged in my classes and was always excited to learn. I was able to discover my love for my STEM classes, thanks to Math classes with Brother Michael, Biology with Mr. Luthi, and Physics with Ms. Locario. BJP not only made me a better student academically, but molded me as a person. I was introduced to

what it meant to be a young woman for others and be a leader with integrity, traits that I would proudly carry with me into high school, as I know all of you will as well

My graduation day was a bittersweet day because I was sad to be leaving BJP, but I was relieved to know that I had a community to turn to whenever I needed to. The Graduate Support program followed me every year of high school and provided me with whatever help I needed to have a successful high school career. I looked forward to my yearly visits from Ms. Theroux and Ms. Myers, and attending the end of year barbecue at Prospect Park every summer with my BJP friends. During my junior year, I began the college application process, and BJP provided me with the resources to make sure my applications were the best they could possibly be before I submitted them. Because of BJP, I received a scholarship to attend SAT tutoring, an opportunity that I greatly appreciated. I was also able to return

to BJP whenever I needed my college essays reread and edited. Many times in high school, my friends would always ask me why I would want to visit my middle school so often. I'll always come back to BJP because BJP helped mold me into the person I am today. After graduating, I had the confidence to take challenging classes in both high school and college, and take leadership positions on campus. Looking at the person I am today, I wouldn't be who I am now if I didn't spend my four years at BJP.

Class of 2020, I know you have all had some similar experiences and reflections as I have, and I know you will go onward to be 'men and women for others' as well, having been shaped and encouraged by BJP. I'm so proud to see you all here today. After spending two years with you all at camp, I've seen you all grow into strong, intelligent young women and men for others. You are all capable leaders, and I can't wait to see how you will live up to your ideals throughout high school. Remember the grad

at grad qualities- to be open to growth, loving, religious, intellectually competent, and committed to justice. High school is one of the most important experiences of your life, and you will continue to learn more about yourself. Remember to always be yourself, have your own voice, and allow yourself to grow. I am so excited and honored to welcome you all to the BJP alumni community. We will always be there for you whenever you need us.

Congratulations Class of 2020! This is only the beginning. I can't wait to see the successful individuals you all become!