

Dear Fernando Zulueta, Antonio Roca, Richard Collins, Mr. Tommasi, Mayor of Verona, distinguished guests, dear parents, family, friends, and – above all – beloved graduating Class of 2025, my name is Riccardo Amicuzi, and I am deeply honored to be speaking to you today as this year's Valedictorian.

I believe that the moment when writers encounter the greatest crises is when they find themselves faced with the need to conclude a story they have loved so much; in this sense, how can I finish what is not just a novel, but a life story?

When I was asked to offer you, dear graduates, a reflection on the extraordinary journey of study we have shared, a considerable number of questions ran through my mind: what could I possibly say to you? What words could I use to summarize the complexity of this experience in such a short space of time?

Perhaps there aren't enough words, or perhaps there are too many. So, I took the liberty of selecting a few, without claiming to represent the soul and feelings of each of us, but with the hope of creating a vivid synthesis of the meaning of our shared path.

In the Babel of languages that make up our humanity, we have managed to find a way to study the universal language by living immersed in it without physically leaving our homes. On this travel, we have encountered the most furious storms in American history, or the calm quiet of law and justice. We have stopped on the islands of the greatest authors or collided with the rocks of grammar.

At this point in our journey, they have called this speech of mine a "valediction," a farewell: but I don't want this to be a leave-taking.

Like Dante and Tennyson's Ulysses, at the end of our voyage we have arrived at this great goal, this glorious Ithaca of ours, not to stop, but only to set out again.

I invite you in particular to put our experience of the world at the service of the world itself: let us offer our help to those we meet along our path, always remembering the importance of being builders of humanity and citizens of the world at large, because, as the Latin playwright Terence reminds us and as we have learned over these years, "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto" (as human beings, nothing human is alien to us).

In our baggage for our new journey, we will certainly carry gratitude to our families, who have supported us in this choice; admiration for our teachers, who have helped us navigate the complexity of the contemporary world; respect for the entire organization, which has laid the foundation for this wonderful opportunity; affection for our classmates, who have supported us in reaching this goal.

But such baggage must not be an anchor, but a sail that lets the wind fill us to propel us toward new horizons.

And again, this is not a farewell, but the start of a new expedition together; having arrived at this point, as at the beginning, I find myself uncertain of what words to use to conclude this speech. Finding no worthy words in myself, I hope that these lines of Alfred Tennyson will resonate in us like a wind blowing to fill our sails, to make us understand that we all have...

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Ad maiora semper!