

Commencement Address

Nolan Catholic High School: Class of 2026

May 24, 2026

Texas Hall, University of Texas at Arlington

Arlington, Texas

On this momentous day that not only concludes your time as students at Nolan Catholic High School, but more importantly formally launches you towards your continued education in the newness of college, we do so as the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Pentecost, the day on which the Holy Spirit imparted His seven gifts upon the Apostles and their successors, the bishops. Pentecost brings the newness of the Gospel into the lives of the baptized.

This newness is further emphasized as we anticipate the promulgation of the Holy Father's first encyclical entitled *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*. Your education at Nolan Catholic High School has prepared you well, not only for what you will gain from your college education but just as importantly what you will offer and bring to your college education. You carry your faith and moral compass grounded in Reason and Revelation into these new times, changing by the developments in the field of artificial intelligence, a field that poses new challenges for the defense of human dignity in such areas as justice and commerce.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the ongoing temptation has been for leaders in education, political life, and business, to elevate efficiency to such a degree that morality is no longer considered as a necessary and fundamental question. Ethics are too frequently subordinated to questions of efficiency that ethical concerns soon develop into technical assessments of systems. This results in a disposition that rests on the principle that if one is sufficiently efficient, one is no longer required to be concerned with how to be morally good. Morality and philosophical anthropology become secondary areas of concern that simply modify the primary area of technological efficiency.

With the development of Artificial Intelligence and algorithms, many will ask how we can submit human life and human community to serve the latest tools of AI. Yet, you graduates of Nolan know that the wise person will ask how AI will serve human nature, human persons, and the human community. The expanding precision of the use of algorithms to set the backdrop for human thinking is a matter of highly efficient gathering of data and further and even more efficient arrangement of data into categories of perceived preference among those employing AI to communicate with an audience or to develop the

desires of an audience to receive communication in particular modes. You know that AI cannot replace the basic human need and desire for the good, the beautiful, and the true.

This is currently called “artificial intelligence” or “artificial thinking” with computers teaching computers and computers teaching themselves. Yet, these remain analogies for human thought and human thinking and the question of efficiency, while marvelous and exciting to consider and observe can influence human thought, harm human intelligence, destroy human intelligence, but cannot replace human intelligence. AI can only gather data, and it takes intelligence to make data intelligible. But it takes character to have data contribute to wisdom.

While AI can serve as a useful tool for our need for rapid information to be conveyed in a way that is effective for our understanding, it is only a moral human character that can contribute to authentic wisdom. Wisdom is the right ordering of one’s life and the life of a community according to the transcendentals. Without the good, the beautiful, and the true — a community of human beings is quickly damaged and soon becomes reduced to a herd driven by passions for exploitation by others. It is wisdom that lifts our vision and understanding to prioritize according to these universal transcendentals that lead to a happy life.

The student teacher relationship fosters virtue. A teacher can provide a student with the example of integrating knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom, within the context of a whole and integrated human life in community. This field of wisdom is larger than and greater than a collection of techniques for using more powerful tools more efficiently. This is what a teacher can supply that an algorithm never can supply. Aristotle taught that to learn how to be virtuous and good requires an example and the interaction with a person more experienced in goodness and virtue. He held that one could not learn how to be virtuous by reading a book — even more so today one cannot acquire virtue and goodness through the technological means of AI. You have learned this during your time at Nolan Catholic High School.

I conclude that you graduates, who will be called upon to contribute meaningfully to the development of laws, rules, and regulations concerning the use of AI in the impact areas of Ethics, Education, Medicine, Religion, Military Science, and Law, should set its focus on that which is more fundamental to human flourishing than simply procedural matters of technological efficiency or financial promise. For the good of the United States, the good of Texas, and the good of family life, go forth with confidence in what you know and have the ability to learn with your focus clearly set upon that which is good, that which is beautiful, and that which is true, to respect the horizon of human flourishing and the common good of all people.