

# Remarks by Diana Amaya Rodas

## For the School of Education at Trinity's 123<sup>rd</sup> Commencement, 2026

Good Morning Friends, Family, Faculty, and most importantly, the graduating class of 2026! It's a great pleasure and blessing to get the opportunity to talk on behalf of our graduating class. It's honestly amazing to see all of us here today looking so accomplished and filled with emotion... because just a few weeks ago, half of us were one exam away from a full mental breakdown. But despite the stress, the sleepless nights, and the moments we doubted ourselves, we made it and for that, ALL of you should be proud of yourselves. I'm sure proud of myself because I honestly thought I wouldn't make it this far, but with the support of my family, friends, peers, and faculty, it was possible. For many of us, getting to this moment means more than earning a degree. It represents sacrifice, resilience, and generations of hard work. Many of our families came here with dreams they hoped their children could fulfill, and today, we honor those sacrifices. To the students who are children of immigrants, first-generation graduates, or who grew up translating for their families while chasing their own dreams — this moment is for you too. Our presence here is proof that perseverance, culture, and community can open doors that once felt impossible.

Now... let's talk nursing school and what it took to get to this point. Nursing school was more than just exams, clinicals, care plans, and sleepless nights. It tested us mentally, emotionally, and physically. There were moments when many of us probably doubted ourselves. Moments we felt overwhelmed, exhausted, or wondered if we were truly capable of becoming nurses or health professionals. But somehow, through early mornings, late-night studying, caffeine, stress, and support from each other, we made it here. This goes for the whole graduating class as well, because I know it wasn't easy for all of us to get to this point. We all poured a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to get here. And that's what makes today so special. Every person sitting in this graduating class has a story. We all came from different backgrounds, faced different obstacles, and carried different responsibilities outside of school. Some of us worked jobs while studying. Some balanced family responsibilities. Some experienced loss, burnout, anxiety, or fear along the way. But despite everything, we kept going.

Nursing school taught me a couple of things. It taught me resilience. It taught me compassion. It taught me how important it is to show up for others even during difficult moments. We learned how to care for patients, but we also learned how to care for people. We learned that sometimes the smallest actions — holding someone's hand, listening, offering comfort — can make the biggest difference. I want to give a big thanks to my friends, because at one point during my journey, I lost myself and felt like I wouldn't be able to make it. I didn't believe in myself. But they pushed me to fight and make it through. They made sure I wasn't left behind and that I could be here today graduating alongside them and all of you, and for that I'm forever grateful. To our professors and clinical instructors, thank you for pushing us to grow and believing in us even when we doubted ourselves. To our families and loved ones, thank you for your patience, encouragement, and sacrifices. We could not have done this without you.

To my fellow graduates, look around you. These are the people who truly understand the journey it took to reach this moment. We survived the stress, the exams, the clinical check-offs, and the countless moments of uncertainty together. As we move into this next chapter, I hope we remember why we chose nursing or our career choice in the first place. Behind every diagnosis is a person. Behind every patient is a family, a story, and someone who needs compassion just as much as treatment. We are entering a profession that is demanding, but also incredibly meaningful. There will be difficult days ahead, but there will also be moments that remind us exactly why we chose this path.

So to the Class of 2026, be proud of yourselves. Celebrate how far you've come. And never forget the strength, determination, and heart that brought you here today. "Por la gracia de Dios, Lo logramos" (Translation: By the Grace of God, We did it)

Congratulations, Class of 2026!