

Theology Honour Roll Call, 2021

Dr. Peter Ricketts
Acadia President and Vice-Chancellor

Welcome Class of 2021, so this record of your academic accomplishment at Acadia University today.

I'm delighted to present the Honour Roll of every member of the graduating Class of 2021. Now, usually we only read out the names of those who are physically attending the convocation ceremony. However, in this extraordinary year of COVID-19, we want to make an exception and announce every graduate's name by faculty and degree. I hope you will enjoy this opportunity to hear your name read out along with your fellow graduates.

Added to the Honour Roll Call are the messages from the honorary degree recipients and the dean of your faculty. The stories that they share are inspiring and uplifting, and I know that their words will serve you well as you embark upon the next phase of your life as a proud member of the Acadia alumni family. And as I said before, I look forward to inviting you all back to join us here on campus when we can celebrate your achievement in person.

And so, until we meet and celebrate again, remember how very proud we are of you. Take care and thank you.

Dr. Rob Raeside
University Marshal

I am Dr. Rob Raeside, University Marshal. As university marshal, I'm pleased to present the Class of 2021 for the Faculty of Theology, including the graduates from the Fall of 2020.

Honour Roll Call – *List read aloud and printed on screen.*

Rev. Dr. Gary V. Nelson
Doctor of Divinity
Acadia University and Acadia Divinity College

- I want to thank the faculty, staff and the governors of Acadia University and of Acadia Divinity College for this honour. As a child of the Prairies but of parents whose roots run deep in The Maritimes, I've come from a clan full of Acadia alumni. And therefore, it's probably time that I aligned myself with the Alma Mater, but thank you and thank you for this honour.

To you, as the graduates of 2020 and 2021, I want to acknowledge the courage and the resilience you have shown over this last year during the COVID crisis. You have weathered the white water of powerlessness from the forces around you, and you have succeeded to come to the end of the chapter of your journey, at least this end of the chapter.

My hope is that you realize that education is not simply the access and the taking in of knowledge, but it also plays a formational role in character building, it widens your horizons, it deeply impacts the way you look at the world, and COVID has produced a rich ground to see that at work.

I have often said that the opposite of hope is not hopelessness. In truth, the opposite of hope is a lack of imagination. In the midst of what seemingly is insurmountable hopelessness, imagination is the way that you navigate and negotiate the terrain.

These are the people who can imagine that things can change. These are the people that can think that things can get better. These are the people who believe that they can make a difference, no matter how small and no matter how insignificant. These are people not bounded in fear, they can imagine a place where we can dialogue in difference and live well together, all because in our curiosity, we seek understanding and community rather than isolation and fear.

The power of imagination lives from a place of security and groundedness in such a way that dialogue is possible in the difference. James Fowler, a theologian one time said, "When the spine of identity is well established, it's possible to risk relating in depth to those who are different than ourselves. But when the spine of identity is weak, then everything is a threat."

My hope is that you will fuel your future with imagination. May imagination be the catalyst in all that you do, and may you choose to live out those driving forces and not give into fear. Years ago, a courageous Black pastor stood on the political stage of Washington DC and he spoke what has become known as "I have a dream" speech. He had the incredible imagination of a new way of living together, not yet realized, not yet fleshed out, but it shook the world to its core, and at least it set a new course.

May you have that kind of imagination in the coming years. Thank you.

Dr. Anna Redden
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies
Acadia University

- Hi everyone, and congratulations to all of you who have completed a post-graduate degree at Acadia University. This is an exciting time for you, and I hope you find many ways to celebrate and savor this very special occasion.

I am Anna Redden, Dean of Research and Graduate Studies. And just like you, I am a proud graduate of Acadia University. I received both my undergraduate and graduate degrees in science from Acadia, and I remember well how exciting it felt to receive these degrees on graduation day. Some things you just never forget.

I also remember how very proud my loved ones were as I received a master's level degree, a first for my family. I am certain that your family and friends are feeling the same joy for you now, and that you are looking forward to the next step, whatever that may be and wherever you may go.

I'm confident that you're ready for what comes next. While we cannot be with you in person today to celebrate this wonderful achievement, we are thinking of you and sending our excitement and warmest wishes as you celebrate this significant milestone.

The research office staff extend their congratulations as well, and hugs too. Theresa Starratt and Joy Cunningham, one or both of whom you have interacted with throughout your graduate studies at Acadia, are thrilled to see you graduate. We are all very excited for you and happy that we could play various roles along the path to your degree completion.

As Acadia graduate students, you have put in much effort and sacrifice along the way, worked long and hard, have had ups and downs, have dealt with a pandemic that we're still experiencing, and you have persevered and succeeded in your goal. Bravo.

Most students now graduating with a master's degree have been engaged in exciting research projects with faculty supervisors at Acadia, spanning research in the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Professional Studies, and the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science. We want you to know how much we value the immense effort that you put into your graduate level coursework, the planning and conducting of a significant and original research project, and both preparing for and defending a thesis. This is no minor feat.

I hope you feel great satisfaction and pride in this major accomplishment. Throughout your life, you will remember your learning and growth experiences at Acadia, and we will remember you.

Please stay in touch in the years to come. We love to see our graduates visit the campus and to hear from you when we cannot see you in person. Please keep us posted on your career and life events.

Dr. Anna Robbins
President, Acadia Divinity College
Dean, Faculty of Theology
Acadia University

- Greetings class of 2021, on behalf of the Faculty of Theology at Acadia. I'm sure that this is not what you imagined when you began your studies. You likely imagined yourself sprinting across the finish line. Sun shining down on you. Your friends and your family cheering you on. A laurel wreath on your head. Or maybe an academic hood draping your shoulders. And a bright sunny future.

Okay. So now, maybe some of you are limping over the finish line rather than sprinting. Your shiny wheels are a bit rusted. Your horizons of opportunity seem to be shifting ever beyond your grasp. Your world has become technologically infinite and relationally minute, all at the same time. This is not what you imagined.

But I want you to know something, Class of 2021. Yours is the first-generation in a long, long time handed a unique opportunity to make the future of something other than a collection of your own individual interests and accomplishments.

You have been told for almost a decade the lie that everything was better before. That the world you inherit is a mess and it's too big for you to make a difference. Now, you have lived through the darkness of this year pushing forward to your goals, despite the challenges you faced. And you have really accomplished something. Even if you don't get to celebrate how you once imagined.

You now have the opportunity and the calling to open doors in closed rooms, to see beyond them, the possibility. Not simply of personal success. But of a world where you work together to tackle some of the greatest problems that face us.

Yes, there is darkness in the world right now. But you have been equipped at Acadia to be light, to carry light and to transform the darkness into something that brings healing and wholeness for the world's people, for the planet we share and for your local community. Can you see it? Can you imagine it?

Don't believe the lies of nostalgia that everything was better before and surrender to discouragement. Step out and make your life and your education really count. C.S. Lewis wrote the "Chronicles of Narnia" at the tail of the end of the Second World War.

In the midst of darkness, Lewis could see possibilities beyond the closed door. He reminded people that there's another reality. One we can participate in, if only we have enough imagination. At the end of "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," the young girl Lucy seeks to return to that place of magic beyond the open door, which she had experienced before. But she realizes she can't find it by going backwards. She can only go forward. It's retold well in the final credits of the film version.

Lucy wanders again into the empty room with the large wardrobe standing against the back wall. She slowly opens the door. But is interrupted by the old professor sitting on the windowsill, smoking his pipe, and gazing wistfully at her and the wardrobe. I don't think you'll get in that way. Again, he said, "You see, I've already tried."

"Will we ever go back?" she asks. He replies, "I expect so. It will probably happen when you're not looking for it. All the same best to keep your eyes open."

So, congratulations, Class of 2021. May you have vision to see beyond the closed door to a world of possibilities. May you have strength to push against the obstacles that stand against you. May you have the courage to carry your light into dark places. And may you have imagination always to see the deeper magic beyond this world. And may you be blessed with fresh hope to grasp your place and making a difference within it.

Keep your eyes open, Class of 2021. And you will help to shape this world into something better than it ever was before.