

**Student Senate Welcome  
Convocation 2023**

Clair Moonen, College of Saint Benedict Student Senate President  
Wesley Kirchner, Saint John's University Student Senate President

**Clair:** Good Morning and thank you all for being here today.

**Wes:** On behalf of the Saint John's...

**Clair:** ...and Saint Ben's student body...

**Wes:** ... President Moonen and I welcome all undergraduate and graduate returning students, new graduate students, transfer students, distinguished faculty, staff, monastic communities, and especially our incoming class of 2027 to the 2023-2024 school year.

**Clair:** We have missed the smell of freshly baked Johnnie bread, the buzz of downtown Saint Joe, the sound of a Johnnie Game Day, and of course the taste of Apple Crisp at Gorecki. Before we left for the summer we heard about Strong Integration, Strategic Planning, the announcement of the new Prioress, Sister Karen Rose, we were named a statewide Top Fulbright Scholar producer and our very own 9 time all American Bennie runner Fiona Smith won many many more races. I'm on the edge of my seat to see what comes next.

**Wes:** We have a lot to look forward to this year! Classic traditions like Thanksgiving dinner in Guild Hall, the annual Christmas tree lighting, and the Festival of Cultures. We also are looking forward to exciting changes! The installation of a new Abbott in January and in a few short weeks the inauguration of our first joint president; Brian Bruess...

**Clair:** ...don't forget reigning First Lady Carol and First Canine George.

**Wes:** Of course! We know why you all came back though...

**Clair:** because we saw Carol's Instagram story that George is Therapy Dog Certified?

**Wes:** that too, but to hear our speech!

**Clair:** Oh, that thing we've been working on all summer? And totally didn't wait until last week to craft from the bottom of our hearts?

**Wes:** Yup! And we sure have a lot to tell... show you. Has anyone said, welcome home?

**Clair:** Let's get to work.

**Clair:** Welcome to your new home at 37 College Ave S and 2850 Abbey Plaza. Trust me, you'll memorize your new address by heart for all the Amazon orders you're about to place and letters you'll write to home. You'll always have a permanent residency here, the neighborhood is friendly, the streets are paved by the trailblazers who came before you with

sidewalks made of your legacy that those who come after you will build upon.

**Wes:** This is *your* house, and we're going to show you what you need to make it a House of Success.

**Clair:** You don't just choose your own path, college experience, and success, you build it over time. Let's start from the ground up.

**Clair:** First you need a Blueprint. The best plans are the ones that change- we are dynamic, we dip our toes into a little bit of everything and we never stop moving forward.

**Wes:** A part of your blueprint that never changes is living the Benedictine Values. Values that are inclusive of any and all faith traditions, values that this neighborhood holds dear. Community living, listening with the ear of your heart, hospitality, and justice. Lean on the architects of this neighborhood, our monastic communities, for guidance and to learn more about these ancient values. Now let's start building.

**Clair:** Every good house needs a strong foundation. You are the strong foundation. Until now you have been shaped by family, peers and the place you call home- build upon that. By sitting here today you have proven stronger than any slab of concrete and from this day forward if that foundation cracks you will be reinforced by the community around you. Take care of this foundation it's the only one you have and we need you here.

**Wes:** Let's put up some walls. Walls keep you warm in the harsh Minnesota winters and cool in our hot summers. On the inside, these walls will be covered in the memories you make and experiences that you have. While here at CSB and SJU you can explore dozens upon dozens of majors, minors, clubs, sports, and activities that can and will form you. My wall has pictures of me spending time with friends in the Abbey Arboretum, working in the woodshop with St. John's Campus Ministry, studying abroad in Italy, and leading the Saint John's student senate.

**Clair:** Some things I have forever framed on my walls are: Me getting handed the gavel being sworn in as CSB President, Me and my fellow Club Lacrosse Team Captains, My first ever latte I made as a barista at The Perk, The Two- about to be Three- Countries I have studied abroad in thanks to the generosity of CSBSJU donors, My internship on Capitol Hill this summer and my favorite photo of parents and I at my First-Generation Honor Society induction. Take advantage of it all and take lots of pictures because it goes by so fast.

**Wes:** Your walls can be as full or as sparse as you choose, but Clair and I would love to see some photos on the walls when we come over and visit. Now we're just missing one last piece.

**Clair:** The Roof isn't something we just raise \*raise the roof motions\* (pause for laughter) (if they don't laugh say "that was a laughter que)

**FACULTY:** WhOoooOp WhOooOOOp

**Clair:** but the Roof is what takes the first impact of hail, redirects rain, and keeps you dry. The roof is the people here at CSB+SJU who will protect you and support you. They won't hang wrongdoings over your head but will protect that noggin at all costs. The roof will provide protection while you venture into the world of academics and ask the big questions we want you to answer.

**Wes:** Trust those around you and allow them to protect you from the storms that life may throw at you. Friends, professors, coaches, alumni, and so many others are here to support you and keep you safe.

In summary, draw up your blueprint, lay your foundation, decorate the walls, and put up your roof. You are the builder of your house, and we want you to do that in whatever way you think is best.

**Clair:** You can decorate how you like, paint your mailbox funny colors, and of course let your neighbor borrow a cup of sugar when needed. Build this house however you want, I pray it doesn't look like any other house on the block- you have a whole team with hammers at the ready.

**Clair:** We know you'll be a great addition to the neighborhood. During your residency, be the neighbor you wish to have. Take advantage of this amazing community, amenities, and wide-open spaces.

**Wes:** Here at CSB + SJU, we have things worth taking risks for, so take them. Sit by a new person on the Link, you could make a new friend. Go on that study abroad trip and expand your worldview, we have dozens available. Raise your hand in class, and don't be scared of asking the burning questions you have.

Do things that challenge you and you will grow.

**Clair:** Take note and take advantage. You're one of us now. Take advantage of the Bennie-Johnnie connection and let the title of Bennie or Johnnie take you places. Build relationships with anyone who will listen. Play on an intramural team, start a study group, go to Zumba. You have hundreds of professors to learn from who in four years *will* be writing you letters of rec-thanks Dr. Dos Santos.

If you have anything, it's options.

**Wes:** After taking advantage of all the things laid before you, have gratitude. Take time to acknowledge those who have supported you and sacrificed for you. Take pride in your accomplishments, finishing papers, acing finals, but also claim the small victories. It's not just about finishing the paper, it's completing your bibliography, and it's not just acing your final, it's studying until that difficult concept finally clicks.

Claim your victories and have gratitude for those around you.

**Clair:** Please, if you can be anything, don't be afraid. What is undeniably true and evident is you are not alone. We are your biggest fans and are cheering you on every step of the way. CSBSJU is a place of diverse minds, eager hearts, and many stories. Take up space, be loud and fearless. It's now up to you. If you need anything, we're just down the block.

**Both:** Welcome Home Bennies and Johnnies.