

*“In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer,
I have overcome the world”*

Through the eyes of John, we find our place and our purpose in the comings and goings of God. You have come to this school. But today is the day of your going forth from this school. Indeed, it is the day of your stepping up and stepping out; in short, the day of your graduation, your passage from one step to another. You are the pride and joy of the school and the pride and joy of your parents and grandparents on this day.

We begin this special day, your special day, here in the chapel just as we have begun almost every day. We begin this day in prayer and praise. And yet, on this day, such routines take on a special significance. It is, of course, not lost on me that for some, the special note is simply no more Chapel! Be that as it may, but think for a moment of how, day in and day out, week in and week out, month by month and year after year, we have gathered here. And for what purpose?

We could speak sociologically and describe our daily and weekly gatherings as a kind of tribal rite, peculiar to the place and arcane custom of old fogies. But that won't do and you know it won't do, because the justification of our gathering has never been so dogmatic, however much you at times might pretend that it is. No. Our gathering is something more, something spiritual and intellectual, something, properly speaking, that is simply theological, regardless of what, if any, religious tradition you identify with.

No, something more has been opened out to you, something which connects in profound and spiritual ways to everything which you have been about here at this school. You see, your comings and goings both to here and from here as well as in and about here in the year or years past find their place and meaning in something greater and something of greater moment. They find their place in the comings and goings of God, not God in our comings and goings, but our lives in the comings and goings of God. This is to take very seriously the spiritual aspect of the whole educational enterprise. Why education? Because we have to be led out of ourselves and into a truer and deeper understanding of the greater reality of which we are but a part. It is something that is at once moral and intellectual and spiritual.

That brings us to the question to which I hope you will give some consideration. What has your time here been about? How will you go forth from here? Not what kind of world will you encounter 'out there', but how will you face it and what will you bring to it? In short, what will you give? Will you be a taker or a giver? A parasite or a contributor, one who gives and who gives graciously out of a sense of gratitude for what has been given to you? I know, at times it has seemed a very tough love, but in the maturity of your graduation day, think

again, of how through exhortation and expectation, through great care, compassion and commitment on the part of teachers and staff you have been led out of the prison of your own selves and into a deeper appreciation of a world that is far bigger than you and yet a world in which you are now privileged to take your place, as graduates, as adults with adult responsibilities, not longer to be spoon-fed and taken by the hand, but able and desirous to stand on your own two feet, responsible and mature, givers, I hope, and not more voices to the endless chorus of self-indulgent whines and self-pityings, mere takers ceaselessly demanding ever more. Much has been given to you.

The question on this day is whether you will honour what has been given to you and of which you are inescapably a part. In the lesson from Deuteronomy we are reminded of the blessings which are received in our comings in and our goings out. But John in his Gospel locates those blessings more clearly and more specifically in the comings and goings of God himself. Our comings and goings in and of themselves belong to that toil 'under the sun' that is, dare I say, ultimately a vanity, an emptiness, a mere presumption of ourselves without regard to the greater whole of which we are a part, without the awareness of the God who is beyond the sun of this world.

No. Here we have been reminded of the comings and goings of God in which we find our place and our purpose. That larger vision speaks directly, honestly and unambiguously to the circumstances and situations of our lives. Jesus says "*In the world ye shall have tribulation*" - there are hardships and there is suffering - but he says "*be of good cheer.*" Why? Because there is something more, something more which belongs to your moral, spiritual and intellectual education in the classroom, on the field and in the chapel. "*I have overcome the world*", he says, by which he means not the trampling underfoot of all that stands in the way of autocratic and self-serving will but rather what belongs to the redemption of all things, of all nature and all human endeavour. He means the raising up of all things into that deeper spiritual and philosophical understanding; in short, into the life of God who has embraced the conditions of our humanity and addressed the situations of our disarray.

To act out of that is to discover the true blessing of our comings and goings and most especially of yours. They find their proper place and true meaning in the comings and goings of God. The greatest blessing is to be found there, the blessing which impels us to give out of the same spirit. It means to go forth from here with gratitude for the privileges which you have enjoyed and to live lives worthy of what you have been privileged to receive. It means to recollect and remember the things which we have struggled together to understand. It means ultimately to find ourselves in that pattern of understanding by which we are led out of ourselves. Such, I pray, has been the meaning of your education.

You have become quite dear to me and I would be remiss if I didn't offer my thanks to God for you and my prayers for you in your future endeavours. Today we bid you adieu. It means go to God, and go with God. Adieu, my friends!

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