

*“You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord ...
for the Lord delights in you”*

What a sight! You are quite a wonder, like Prospero’s child, *Miranda!* All dressed up with somewhere to go and here on parade! At last, you say, the last of the three-ring circus of cadets for another year! And you are here. Where is here? What *means* here? Grade Twelve IB students, take note, the first of several literary references to Margaret Laurence’s *The Diviners*. The exam is a week Monday.

We meet in the soft gleam of a May evening in this holy place. In a way, the parade through town is a kind of dance of the understanding, both for you and for the wider community. It completes the triad of the cadet weekend uniting school, church and the military in a service of worship, and uniting, too, things both secular and sacred.

There is the secular remembering of *The Battle of the Atlantic*, recalling the somber realities of war especially for Maritime communities that live by and from the sea. During the Second World War, the University of King’s College, formerly here in Windsor until 1920 when it was relocated to Halifax, was actually designated as a ship, the HMCS Kings, and served as a training school for the navy. German war-time propaganda claimed that it had been sunk by U-boats! But I am happy to report that the rumours of the death of the school and the college have often been at least a trifle, if not greatly, exaggerated.

And here you are. But what about the sacred? We meet here where ‘*here*’ means the holy place that speaks about the divine purpose of our lives. “*There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,/ Rough-hew them how we will.*” We meet in the sacred remembering of the Ascension of Christ. It marks the completion of the season of the Resurrection and even more, it signals the homecoming of the Son to the Father, having gone forth into the world and having returned to the Father. In his homecoming we find our own homecoming. What does that mean? It means that there is a sense of purpose and direction to human lives without which we are but cosmic orphans adrift in an empty and indifferent universe. The task of your education in no small measure is about learning your place in the order of things.

A homecoming? Yes and one which is achieved through many struggles and challenges. It has been a remarkable year and one in which as a school and a community we have had to face some very difficult and devastating events. It was only a few months ago in early January that we met here for Brandon’s memorial service and only a few weeks earlier in December that we gathered here in vigil for Jared, our hearts at once broken and full of fear and dread, when all seemed lost and “*no man was his own.*” But we met in prayer, placing Brandon in God’s gracious keeping and seeking God’s healing grace for Jared. And by a miracle of grace, we have been blessed to have Jared back among us in these last few weeks. You can’t know, Jared, just how much your return means to all of us! A miracle of courage and determination that brings joy even in the midst of our sorrows at the loss of Brandon. Jared, we salute you!

But “let us not burden our remembrance with a heaviness that’s gone,” as Prospero says to Alonzo. Note, Grade Twelves, the literary reference to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* that speaks of reconciliation and healing and the sense of coming to terms with the events of the past just as in *The Diviners*. Without that there can be no homecoming.

“How came we ashore?” Miranda asks her father, Prospero, who has just recounted the sad events of treachery and deceit that resulted in their being ejected from their home in Milan only to arrive on a tropical island, the *Bermoothes*, it seems, Bermuda. Shakespeare was, perhaps, the first to promote Bermuda as a tourist destination and, no doubt, there were more than a few who were thinking about such warmer prospects amidst the cold scotch mist and the skirl of the pipes on Friday night!

Prospero’s answer to Miranda is profound. “By providence divine,” he says, signaling something already of the theme and idea of a greater good that arises out of the experiences of suffering and sorrow and even out of human evil. The lessons of Providence are always achieved through the pageants of suffering and sorrow, it seems. And such have been some of our lessons this year as a school.

It has been about a kind of growing up, a kind of maturing that comes when we have to confront hard and difficult things. Far more than the tribulations of this week, as a school we have “come ashore” after far greater tribulations. I can only commend you on the mature, respectful and responsible way in which you have conducted yourselves. Personally and professionally, of course, I can only echo Prospero’s words that it has been “by providence divine.”

Yet a crucial part of that has to do with you and your devotion to the ideals and the principles belonging to the educational project of the school. The ideals of “gentleness, learning and humanitas,” it seems to me, are only realized when we are faithful, *fideliter*, to such formative maxims as *Deo, Legi, Regi, Gregi*, “for God, for the Law, for the King and for the People,” in spite of ourselves and our own follies and foibles. Notice that there is no “for me” in such mottos. This week of tribulations has seen you bear witness to these ideals through your commitment and compassion, your dedication and determination. For that may God be praised! In every way, it is about *living beyond yourselves*. Brandon smiles.

This week of tribulations, of course, has been *a week of everything*. There have been cadets, cadets and more cadets under the diligent direction of the wonderfully mustachioed Major Miles and his cadre of instructors. There has been a music concert, *the Spring Fling*. There have been rugby games, and a plethora of other sports such as baseball, track-and-field, tennis, and swimming. There have been extra classes in preparation for IB exams. There have been play rehearsals and choir practices, and physics competitions and so on and so on. There has been simply everything, everything that belongs to the life of the school. “All I want is everything,” as Morag says in *The Diviners*. But be careful what you wish for! For it means having to divine just what everything is, learning what to look for and in what way.

It is the kind of learning that happens through the realization of limits that opens us out to God and to a larger vision of ourselves in him. It runs counter to so much of the two sides of contemporary culture; its complacency and self-indulgence, on the one hand, and its fearful uncertainty and despair, on the other hand. No doubt, you have been made to do everything but the point is that you have done it. I remind you of that little story about myself when I was your age, awakening each day and confronting a plaque on the wall telling me that *"happiness lies not in doing what you want to do, but in doing what you have to do."* To find delight in duty and obligation is a higher wisdom that belongs to a sense of purpose and direction; in short, to the homeland of the spirit in which we may find our homecoming.

It means, too, that we wrestle together with some of the questions that our culture has the hardest time dealing with, questions about the role and place of religion in the public discourse, questions about the relation between sacred and secular, questions about the relations between different religions within a pluralistic culture, questions that will not go away but which need to be faced with grace, honesty and good humour. It reminds me of a story.

A little old Christian lady comes out onto her front porch each morning and shouts, "Praise the Lord!"

And each morning her atheist neighbour shouts back, "There is no God!"

This ritual of praise and denial goes on for weeks. "Praise the Lord!" she yells. "There is no God," he replies.

As time passes, the lady encounters some financial set-backs and has trouble buying food. She goes out onto her porch and asks God for help with groceries, and then says, "Praise the Lord!"

Next morning, she finds the groceries she asked for on her porch! So, of course, she shouts, "Praise the Lord!"

Out jumps the atheist and says, "Ha-ha! I bought those groceries. There is no God!"

The lady looks at him and smiles. She shouts, "Praise the Lord! Not only did you provide for me, Lord, but you made the Devil pay for the groceries!"

The Devil wears Prada and buys groceries!

Well, many things *have* been provided for you and, *"by providence divine,"* many things, too, have been required of you. You have responded marvelously, making the tasks of this week and this year your own. That is real education and a kind of miracle. It takes a school and a community for it to happen: a wonderfully bizarre, eccentric and eclectic bunch of teachers, my dear colleagues, who put everything on the line for you and with you; a campus of buildings, facilities and the resources, personal and material, to maintain them for your benefit and use; and, all of you as a remarkable group of young people who are here to learn with the backing and support of parents and benefactors.

At a time when the population is declining in the Maritimes, King's-Edgehill is busy countering the cultural trend with a remarkable increase in the prospective birthrate ... among the faculty and staff, I hasten to add! There is Ms. Lynn Purcell, Ms. Katarina

Urdova, Ms. Aynsley Sasaki, Ms. Sarah Harvey in the Athletic Centre, and now the Blocks, Dale and Dawn, are expecting as well; all of which gives further meaning to the school as family. We have been greatly blessed with the leadership and direction that our headmaster, Mr. David Penaluna has given the school and we are delighted to have him back among us, head and body, as it were, especially for this special weekend which concentrates so much of the life of the school into the span of a week, *a week of wonder*, and one, too, in which we have been blessed with the presence of our new headmaster-designate, Mr. Joe Seagram.

Something of that theme of wonder and delight is captured for us in the Ascension of Christ and in the readings for this night. In the Old Testament lesson from *Isaiah* that Erin read, there is a marvelous sense of the redemption of the human community from the devastating and alienating experiences of being forsaken and desolate, things which we as a school have experienced, things which are ultimately named by Christ's word on the cross, "*My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me,*" but are named by him to God, and are ultimately overcome by his Resurrection and Ascension, in his going to the Father. In his Ascension, there is the wonder of our having a place for our griefs and sorrows as well as for our joys and delights. They are with Christ in his love for the Father, that "*where I am,*" he says, "*there you may be also.*"

In the lesson which Sandy read from *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, there is a marvelous image of *the redeemed community of our humanity* that focuses on Christ as the Lamb of God, who alone is "*worthy to open the scroll,*" the word of God's purpose, written ultimately for our learning. Our learning what? The worthiness of the Lamb who has redeemed our humanity, "*from every tribe and every tongue.*" Because of such things, the ancient doctors of the Church see in the Ascension of Christ, not only the *homecoming* of Jesus, having accomplished all the work of redemption, but also, "*the exaltation of our humanity.*" It is an exaltation, *a raising up into glory of our humanity*, that is only accomplished *in and through the pageant of tribulation*, the tribulations of Christ for us and in us, if we will learn, like Caliban even, to "*be wise hereafter and to seek for grace.*"

We have an end with God, our taking delight in him and in one another through his taking delight in us. Such are the things of prayer and praise. Such is the joy and delight of this night, that we may "*runne, rise, rest with thee.*"

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*Rev'd David Curry
Chaplain
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