



## THE SALESIAN CENTER FOR FAITH & CULTURE

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### BACCALAUREATE 2003

This evening we begin a weekend of great transitions for these soon-to-be graduates of DeSales University. What you face next week will be vastly different from what you've experienced up to this point.

The most obvious transition, of course, is to the "real" world. After four years of fun here (or five or six), you will now be on your own out there, in a world of opportunities and threats. As of tomorrow, you are free – free from our regulations, free for your own decisions, which we hope will always be good ones.

While learning to live in freedom is certainly a significant transition, I actually think there are two other changes that may have a more immediate impact on your lives. The first has to do with sleep! You're about to find out that the day really does begin at sunrise, rather than noon!

The second meaningful change in your lives, I think, has to do with fashion! Now that classes and dorm life are over, sweatpants will have to give way to suits, t-shirts to ties. And even if you end up wearing a uniform of some sort, it most certainly will not include a baseball hat worn backwards.

If you think a change in fashion is not the trend this weekend, just consider what you're wearing now – caps and gowns! It's rather odd attire, if you think about it. (And just wait until you see some of the colorful costumes tomorrow!) I'd guess that the last time all of you were in gowns was probably when you were newborns. You who are women, of course, wear fancy gowns to formals and weddings. But guys, unless you become a judge, this may be the only gown you ever wear as an adult (or at least I hope so!).

The wearing of academic gowns is a time-honored tradition, dating back to the Middle Ages. Some say it started because the class buildings were unheated. Others think that the gown is meant to set you apart from the town, learned students rising above ordinary citizens. Whatever their genesis, one thing can be said for sure about your caps and gowns ... when you take them off, after receiving your degree (and after all the pictures), you will, in a certain sense, be a new person.

That is the image – the new person you are to become – that we celebrate in the Scripture readings chosen for this Baccalaureate Mass, especially the second reading from St. Paul. There (Colossians 3:12-17) he uses a fashion metaphor to highlight what each of you should wear as you enter into the real world: *clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.*

- *Mercy* – because out there in the real world, you will get hurt; but if you want not to stay hurt, then be forgiving.
- *Kindness* – because out there in the real world, people can be mean; but if you try, you can make it a friendlier place.
- *Humility* – because in the real world, you’ll soon find out that you’re not perfect; so admit it and move on.
- *Meekness* – because out there, you’ll see that others are not perfect either; and that’s OK.
- *Patience* – because out there in the real world, you can only do what you can do, you can only be who you are ... but be that well, as St. Francis de Sales says.

During your years at DSU, we tried to teach you to “dress for success.” We’ve provided you with intellectual abilities that will help you to make your own fashion statement in the world: the ability to think, critically and analytically; the ability to communicate, in spoken and written word; the ability to appreciate the world around you, the world before you, and the world within you. But these are really just accessories to your lifelong wardrobe.

If, instead, you want to make a lasting fashion statement, if you really want to make your mark in the world you are about to enter, then do as Paul says: *over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect.* Three-piece suits or faded jeans, rented formal wear or bookstore buyouts, academic gowns or comfy clothes ... in the end, none of that matters, as long as you love. This is the person you are being called now to become – one who loves in all things.

That is why, as you transition to a new way of life, we come here to the Lord’s table, where we celebrate God’s love for us. In this Easter season, we celebrate new life, when the risen Lord Jesus is clothed with immortality. He it is who makes us *God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved.* He it is who makes you capable of infinitely more, now that you go out into the world. He it is who remains for all *the way, the truth, and the life.*

And so we *give thanks to God the Father through him.* We give thanks for your spending your time (and your parents’ money) with us here at DSU. We give thanks for the many gifts and talents that God has shown us in you. And we give thanks for the new persons you are to become – in mercy and kindness, in humility and gentleness, and above all, in love.

+ May God Be Praised +

Rev. THOMAS F. DAILEY, O.S.F.S., S.T.D.  
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