



THE SALESIAN CENTER
FOR FAITH & CULTURE

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I'm honored that the Class of '04 selected me to deliver this farewell sermon to you. But I'm also realistic enough to keep this in perspective. After all, the vast majority of folks cannot even remember who spoke at their graduation, let alone what the speaker said. Spoken words, it seems, just don't stay with us very long, especially today, as we live in an age of digital imagery and global interactivity.

In fact, I did a few calculations to prove this. How many words do you think you've listened to in your collegiate career? Well, assuming that faculty lecture at 30 words per minute – admittedly a low estimate – taking 5 courses @ 150 minutes per week, times 15 weeks per semester, times 2 semesters per year ... and you get ... math majors? The answer is 2.7 million words for a 4-year degree (and, of course, many more if you were here on the 5- or 6-year plan!).

With that in mind, I offer you this evening just three words! No, they are not “let's go Bulldogs” ... although, even as we sit here, our nationally ranked baseball team is in Boyertown defending its regional championship. And, no, the three words are not “give us money” ... you'll be hearing those soon enough from the Alumni Development office. Actually, the three words I have for you come from an earlier sermon, delivered by the greatest preacher of all time (who was unavailable this evening). The words come from the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Here they are ...

Blessed are you!

These are simple words, easy to understand, even for college graduates. ***Blessed are you!*** They are also radical, indeed revolutionary, words. For when Jesus describes those who are blessed, his words uproot and overturn our ordinary conceptions of what is important in this world. The truly blessed are those who are poor in spirit, pure in heart, meek, merciful, and so forth. ***Blessed are you!*** ... three easy-to-remember words.

But the reason I've chosen these three words for you is not because they are simple or radical or even memorable. In my view, these three words are necessary for you, now more than ever, especially as you leave the cozy confines of Center Valley and venture forth into the vast unknown of that “real world” out there. Quite frankly, our culture does not think you are so blessed.

The business world thinks you are blessed only if you are worth a lot, the entertainment world only if you are a star, the athletic world only when you win. In healthcare you are blessed only if you remain conscious and have a quality of life. And in politics ... well, I'm not sure anyone is blessed.

What the world says is that your blessedness, your happiness, your well-being has to be earned, achieved, or accomplished. You should get what you deserve ... unless of course you win at Super Millionaire or the Powerball.

Here at DeSales University, we think differently. We are convinced that faith needs to inform our culture. And we have tried our best to teach that you are blessed. Here and now, today and tomorrow, you are blessed ... no matter what you accomplish in life (or don't), no matter what happens to you (or doesn't). As our patron, St. Francis de Sales, reminds us: [human persons] are the perfection of the universe, the epitome of the whole world, because in them – in you – is to be found those realities of life and of love that have God as their origin and their fulfillment.

Blessed are you ... because you can learn. As we'll see tomorrow when you get your degree, you have reached a level of higher education, something that most people your age in the world do not have the opportunity to do.

Blessed are you ... because you know love. As you enjoy the events of this weekend, be sure to say "thank you" to the family and friends who have supported all your efforts here.

Blessed are you ... simply because you have life, the most precious gift of all, a gift given each of you by God. This is the gift that every one of us needs to defend and promote in our culture. This is the gift that is now yours to be developed in new and lasting ways.

Blessed are you these are words of Wisdom, which we heard in the first reading is resplendent and unfading. Blessed are you ... these are words of the Spirit, not the flesh. And as St. Paul tells us in today's second reading, life according to the Spirit leads to the kingdom of God. *Blessed are you* ... these are the words with which we leave you.

I realize that I've spoken awfully long for having only three words to tell you. So ... let us go, now, to the table of the Lord, there to receive Him whose grace makes us blessed. Let His words serve not just as a farewell sermon for graduation, but as the rock-bottom truth to all that you do and to all that you are and will become. *Blessed are you!*

+ May God Be Praised +

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