



THE SALESIAN CENTER FOR FAITH & CULTURE

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BACCALAUREATE – May 20, 2005

And so it begins! Your weekend will be filled with grand ceremonies, lots of photos, and maybe even a few parties! This weekend also means lots of speeches, and I'm honored that you've selected me to give the first one.

My words are based on the Scripture readings you just heard. The first (Proverbs 4:1-13) is a father's parting message to his children. It's short and it's sweet. It's "excellent advice" and timely, too. So I say to you as he did – ***Get wisdom!***

Notice, the message is not "get a degree" ...we'll take care of that tomorrow! Nor is the message, "get a job" ...though that may be what your parents are now telling you. And, believe it or not, the message is not "get rich" ... though we do want you to pay back all those loans!

Get wisdom! That's the Bible's message. That's my advice. But if you don't believe me (or divine inspiration!), then consider this evidence, from Harvard University.

A while back someone studied 1500 graduates from their MBA program. Of those 1500, 1250 of them said, on their graduation day, that what they wanted most in life was to go out and make a lot of money so that they could then do the things that they really wanted to do, things that would make them be happy. The other 250 said that they would just try to lead a good life and not worry about being successful. Twenty years later, they studied the same group of graduates. By then 101 of them had become millionaires. Interestingly, of those 101 millionaires, how many do you think came from the group who set out trying to make money? Just one! The other 100 were from the group whose only ambition was to lead a good life.

So there's your proof! Get wisdom, first, and the benefits will follow. But before you set out on your journey to get wisdom, let me make two warnings.

First, let's be realistic. You're not going to get wisdom here (sorry!) I know you're worked really hard, and I know that you've studied a whole lot in your 4 years here (or 5 or 6 ...). But all you got from us is some knowledge, perhaps a few marketable skills, and maybe some good contacts for the future. What you didn't get is wisdom ... not yet. For that, you'll need the experiences that life is now going to give you: the experiences of success and failure, of joy and sadness, of friends and enemies. Experience comes with every up and down emotion. All together, they constitute this grand adventure we call human life. That's why we refer to this weekend as "commencement" ... it's just the beginning for you!

So don't think you got wisdom here. But my second warning is that you really can't get it out there either! You won't find wisdom on the Internet; the web may give us lots of information, but it doesn't say whether or not those thoughts are any good. You won't find wisdom from the media; television may give us various viewpoints, but it doesn't say whether or not those views are true. And you won't even

find wisdom through science; modern technology may give us the ability to do lots of fascinating things, but it doesn't say whether or not we should do them.

No, wisdom is not somewhere out there. It's in here, in the wonder of who you are and who you will become. The really important things in life – the good, the true, the beautiful – these can't be located in the world you are entering. They go far beyond this world. They run deeply into the human spirit. They are matters of your heart. They exist in the realm of your soul.

That's why we need to take the second Scripture reading with the first. There (Colossians 3:12-17) St. Paul says, ***Let the word of God (Christ) dwell in you richly.*** That's right. If you want wisdom, look within. If you want happiness, listen to your heart. If you want success, search your soul. For it is there that God dwells. And if you listen to that voice – not the voice of what you like or want or wish, but the word of God as it is calling you to be – then everything else in your life will fall into place.

Our world thinks that first you have to “have” things, so that you can “do” things, so that you can then “be” somebody. But the message of Christian Humanism is to reverse all that. “Be” who God wants you to be. Then you'll be able to “do” anything you want and you'll “have” everything you need.

In this, your last year at DSU, you have a shining example of this. What happened this year is an event that will be, I'm predicting, the most significant event in world history for the rest of your life. It was just last month that millions and millions of people joined in celebrating one man ... POPE JOHN PAUL II.

It didn't matter whether folks were Catholic, or even religious. They all recognized him. We all mourned his passing. The reason for this global show of respect and reverence was not due to his charisma or even his intellect. No, what the world saw in that pope was a man of wisdom, a man who taught the truth, who promoted the good, and who appreciated the beautiful. And the reason he could do all that is because he was concerned first and foremost with matters of the soul ... his own and that of every person on the planet. He was, to put it simply, a man of deep prayer. He had lots of other things to do, of course. But each and every day he began by conversing with God.

So there's the secret. You get wisdom by letting the word of God dwell in you. And that divine Word will speak if you will just listen. You don't have to be a spiritual professional, like the pope. But if you spend at least a few moments in prayer each and every day, then I predict you'll have an even better life than those Harvard millionaires. That's why our first event this weekend is a liturgy, a time of prayer to give thanks to God for your accomplishments at DSU. (And don't forget to thank your parents and families, too!)

That's all the words I've got for you ... except these: just as, in tonight's gospel (John 17: 9-11, 14-17), Jesus prayed for his disciples as he sent them into the world, let me assure you, the class of 2005, that all of us who remain in Center Valley will be praying for you, too.

+ May God Be Praised +

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