

For the Great Class of 2023
Commencement Day
20 May, 2023

Gentlemen, I want to begin this morning by saying to you publicly what I have said at every senior dinner this year. I want your parents and all of Prep to hear it now. And that is very simply: Thank you! As Will alluded to in his remarks, your time here has been so different than what it started out as in the fall of 2019. And for so many reasons you could well have turned in on yourselves, checked out, let it all slip by. But instead you have invested in Prep and its community, its brotherhood, its tradition, its spirit. You have invested in each other and in the whole student body. And what did you invest? Your time, your talent, your very selves. And you have given us a better Prep, a better community, a better brotherhood. I know these things do not happen by accident or coincidence, but only with great effort. So thank you. Thank you from me. Thank you from the whole Prep community. Thank you from the future for the legacy you leave us.

Now, I'm afraid I have bad news for you: you'll never get all you've given back. But maybe that's the best news too: you'll never be the same. You've grown in so many ways, so many good ways, and I want to remark on just one of them.

Last evening I talked to you about *agere contra* – fighting against our natural tendency toward selfishness. Today I want to talk a little bit about a more familiar term.

You see, there's an alternative translation for AMDG – *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. It also means *ruined for life*. That's you now: ruined for life. You're never going to look at the world the way you did in the fall of 2019. You're never going to be satisfied with mediocrity, not in others, but even less in yourself. (Oh, don't get me wrong – it's not that you won't have some *meh* days and turn in some *meh* performances – but you won't be satisfied, and if you're honest with yourself, you'll be glad that you aren't.) You're never again going to be comfortable if there isn't that sense of brotherhood, that sense of community among a group of people. You're not going to be happy when people aren't there for one another. And you are going to be haunted when you see injustice and hunger and hatred and stupidity and ignorance because you will know – you will know – that these things don't have to be; this is not the way the world should be.

And my challenge to you is exactly that: to let yourself be dissatisfied, let yourself be uncomfortable, let yourself be unhappy and haunted, let yourself be troubled as long as there are things that should not be. Let

yourself be ruined for life. There is no greater gratitude you can offer your parents for the gift they have given you with the opportunity to come to Prep. There is no greater gratitude you can offer each other than to let each other know that this time mattered so much that you want it to make a difference in the world as well. There is no greater gratitude you can offer Prep and your Jesuit education than to take it and run with it. And to remember that it is AMDG, not AMDme.

Ruined for life...ruined for life. And by the way, it is your own fault that you're ruined for life. I was thinking that through the senior dinners as I listened to you talk about why you came to Prep, as you told your stories about your choice, and why you kept choosing Prep in the darker days. And as I listened I kept remembering a poem by Robert Frost that I memorized as a kid, back when it didn't mean much to me – it was just another homework assignment – but it does now, and partly because of you. And this is my gratitude to you:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

And that has made all the difference, brothers – the difference for you,
the difference for us all.

Now, I've joking with some of you about the reason we admitted you to
Prep four years ago – so that one day I could kick you out. And if you
hadn't noticed, that's what I've just done. So...Go! Shoo! Go make a
difference! Do great things! *Ite, inflamata est!* Go, set the world on
fire!

AMDG