



IN HONOR OF
MICHAEL J DALY '41
RECIPIENT OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR
10 NOVEMBER, 2023

Ms. Daly and Mr. Pavlis, Mr. and Mrs. Miller, it is a privilege to welcome you here to Georgetown Prep today.

There is an old saying: God writes straight with crooked lines.

I was reminded of that saying this morning as I was listening to Dr. Ochs speaking about Mike Daly and reflecting on the many twists and turns his life took, both on the way to his reception of the Medal of Honor and on the path his life took thereafter.

It's odd, isn't it: we often think that a successful life is a smooth progression from one achievement to another; that a success casts a lingering glow over everything that follows, and that true success comes easily to those who achieve it. And I dare say that we imagine that holiness is the same way: that the saints progress from one stage to the next, from one good deed to an even greater one, from one prayer to an even holier utterance, always feeling more and more at home with God.

But the truth is that's not life at all, and we see that glaringly in the story we have just heard. In fact, Mike Daly's Medal of Honor did not come to him so much as an opportunity to celebrate himself as a cause for humility, an incredible challenge, a burden that he had to learn to carry,

dare I say perhaps even a cross. Surely, we might think, surely one who has been so honored has reached the pinnacle of success. But that was not Mike Daly's experience.

Rather his experience was that he had to learn to honor what was really important, he had to learn to honor that instinct – that grace – that was so important to him: his deeply-rooted care for others, especially those who needed his care. Only on reflection could he see how that *cura personalis* was the thread that held his life together from Prep's athletic fields to Nuremberg, to Fairfield and his family, to St. Vincent's Hospital.

And that, my brothers, stands as a challenge to us all – not to drift from thing to thing in a quest after some illusory “success” but to discover deep within ourselves what is truly important and to strive after it through thick and thin. And there will always be thick and thin.

As I listened I was also reminded of another brave man – a leader of men, who was also a soldier. Like Mike, he rallied his men in a hopeless battle, leading from the front against overwhelming odds. He was so brave that his men followed him, even though they were pretty sure they could not win. His great battle began on the walls of Pamplona, where he quite nearly lost a leg and was given up for dead. But he fought back, not only to regain his health, but to find what was truly important – to find what God had created him for. His name was Íñigo López de Oñaz y Loyola, but we know him simply as Ignatius. And this is what he wrote about his life, years later:

(We are) created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by doing so to save (our souls); and all other things on the face of the earth are created to help us in the pursuit of this end. It follows from this that (we are) to use these things insofar as they help towards this end, and to be free of them insofar as they stand in the way of it.

To attain this, we need to make ourselves indifferent towards all created things, provided the matter is subject to our free choice and there is no prohibition. Thus for our part we should not want health more than sickness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one—and so with everything else; desiring and

choosing only what conduces more to the end for which we are created (Spiritual Exercises, #23).

You know, I honestly have no idea if Mike ever heard those words when he was a student at Prep, but I see in the lines of his life an effort to live them and to live by them.

Michael J. Daly '41 received the highest honor that this nation can bestow, and as we observe Veteran's Day tomorrow, it is good to remember that one of our own was so honored and that bravery for which he was honored. However I have a feeling that Mike would want us to remember something much more important: that we will not be judged by the honors we receive in this life, but for the honor we give to others. For it is that honor that we give – the love, the reverence, the courage, the heart that we extend to others – which makes our lives worth living.

And so let us pray:

Good and loving God,

as we remember and honor

the legacy of Michael J. Daly '41 today,

bestow upon us the gift that he discovered in himself

– the courage to live a life filled with purpose,

a life committed to those who needed care.

We ask that you bless this memorial of Mike

and grant that all who shall gaze upon it,

especially his Prep brothers,

will find in this moment the grace to lives

of competence, conscience, courage, and compassion,

lives of faith, and lives for and with others.

We all ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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AMDG