



GEORGETOWN PREPARATORY SCHOOL
10900 ROCKVILLE PIKE | NORTH BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20852 | WWW.GPREP.ORG

Rev. James R. Van Dyke, S.J., President
Commencement 2024 Remarks

Some of you have heard me joke that the only reason we admitted you to Prep was so that one day I could kick you out, hopefully with a diploma. I hope you've been paying attention because that's what I did just a few minutes ago. It's over. You were never meant to be here forever. And that's a good thing. From its very founding – even before its founding – the brotherhood of the Society of Jesus was to be found *in dispersionem* – in dispersion. Even before Paul III approved the Society's *Constitutions* in 1540, Ignatius had dispatched his best friend, Francis Xavier to the very ends of the earth with the order *Ite, inflammate omnia* – *Go, set fire to the earth*. And those are my words to you now: Go, do good things! Do great things! *Ite, inflammate omnia!*

But before you leave, I want to ask you three favors:

First, do not spend your life looking back. Your days at Prep have been good days, as Mr. President DeYoe said in his comments, but they have *not* – I repeat – they have *not* been the best days of your life. The best days of your life are in front of you; they are waiting for you to create them.

Second, take Prep with you. We cherish the brotherhood we enjoy here, and that's great. But take it with you; the world needs it! Create it where it is needed. Give it to people who are alone. Share it, generously. And keep that hunger for brotherhood alive in you. Look for it. As Bishop Menjivar said a few weeks back, we all need community. Find your brothers and sisters. Find your church. You will need it.

Third, as Mr. Glennon said the other morning, Prep is a ticket. Your time here will open many doors and opportunities for you in the future. You will catch a lot of fish (John 21:11)! But whatever success you find – whether as a doctor or a lawyer or as a business man or – heaven help us – as a Jesuit priest – remember that there is finally only one success that counts – only one! – that of being a good man, a good person. Or as Jesus said to his disciples, and as Ignatius often said to his friend Francis Xavier, *What would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?* (Mark 8:36). Do not lose your soul!

Well, tradition dictates that I offer you a poem at this point. As some of you heard at the Senior Dinners, being a priest, I don't have any children, but I have five hundred sons. So what came to mind was a one by Rudyard Kipling, written to and for his son. It is entitled "If."

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Well, that's it. You've had to put up with my speeches a lot the past few days. So I'll end with a line by Sean Connery from one of my favorite movies: "Here endeth the lesson!" Godspeed!

✘

AMDG