REMARKS
COMMENCEMENT 2026

Mr. Headmaster Glennon, Members of the Board, Esteemed Members of our Faculty and Staff, Dear Parents, Families and Friends, and, most of all, Our Brothers, the Alumni of the Great Class of 2026, Mr. President Kozak and Mr. Vice President Baker:

Some of you who have heard far too many of my homilies know that one of my favorite bits of Biblical trivia is the thing that God says most frequently in the Bible: Do not be afraid.

Do not be afraid. And it's easy to remember how many times He says it: 365. Now I'm sure – well, sorta sure – it's just a coincidence, and I don't know what we're supposed to do during Leap Years. But it's good to know that that's what God wants us to remember the most.

But why would that be it? I think maybe because life can be frightening. And we human beings, even though we like to think we're tough, we're really pretty timid creatures. We know that there are no monsters under the bed or in the closet, but it never hurts to take a running jump to get into bed, and everyone knows you close the closet door before you close your eyes. And the psychologists tell us that the fight or flight response is pretty strong in us.

You know, on Saturday, 4 March, 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed the nation in the depths of the Great Depression and reminded us that we had nothing to fear but fear itself. That sounds really comforting, but fear is a fearsome thing. You think of the fear that leads to so much of the racism, the prejudice, the violence that we see in our world. The fear of some one different from me. The fear that some one is better than me. The fear that I'll be left behind. Not to mention the fear that we each have for the people we love. No, fear can make people do terrible things.

My Brothers, I'm going to predict your future, and I will absolutely guarantee it: you will be challenged. You'll be challenged sometimes even to within an inch of your life, maybe even knocked to the ground.

So there: now you know. It's a fact. And you don't have to be afraid of it. In fact, you can even embrace it. After all, as that great sage of the Hanley Center and the South Room and Fegan-Galvin Field, Coach Paro, would remind us all, adversity is our friend. We don't need to fear it. We can face it courageously.

Courageously. With heart. That's what courageously means: with heart.

You know, it's a funny thing about Ignatius. We tend to think that that guy who stood on the walls of Pamplona against overwhelming odds was

courageous. But I think that was just bravado…it was just about making himself look like the great knight he wanted to be. No, I think the real courage in Ignatius's life came when he had the guts to turn around, when he had the guts to pitch it all on God, when as a 30-something year old guy he put himself in a fourth grade classroom to learn Latin so he could study theology so he could do what he thought God maybe wanted him to do, which was to take care of people's souls. It looks a lot like humility, but I think that's what real courage sometimes looks like. And so does real love.

Do not be afraid. The fact that the future will challenge you, perhaps even within an inch of your life, is nothing to be afraid of. You'll have the opportunity to grow – really grow – and the opportunity to love – really love – which is to love even when things are hard, even when it seems impossible. Because that's what love is. That's who, as John writes in his epistles, that's who God is. So have courage. Stay humble and hungry, as Mr. Glennon told you four years ago. Have heart. Do not be afraid.

Well, as I've told many of you many times before, we've only kept you around these past four years among the greens and the sand traps and the water hazards, Mr. Hughes, so that one day I could kick you out, which, if you were listening, you would realize I did a several minutes ago. And tradition has it that the first thing I do for our youngest alumni is recite a poem, or at least read it if I don't have it down by heart.

So this is “A Hymn to God the Father” by the 17th century English poet John Donne; I love it most of all because the author indulges in a terrible stream of puns on his own name, which are actually the whole point:

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

As we complete our celebration, let’s bow our heads and pray for our brothers, the Great Class of 2026, to the God who loves them:

The Lord be with you. R./ And with your spirit.

Eternal Father, when Jesus stood on the threshold of his public ministry, the veil of heaven parted for a moment to reveal you in all your fatherly pride. “This is my beloved son,” you said, “in whom I am well pleased.”

Today we ask your blessing on these beloved sons – yours and ours – in whom you must also be well pleased. They have glorified your name by developing a hundred-fold the talents you have given them. They have served you by learning to serve all of your children, down to the least, and they have done your will in loving one another. Grace them with the knowledge that deep in their hearts they will always carry a large supply of love — yours and ours.

And so it is in your name that we bless them (I invite all members of the faculty to extend their hands in blessing):

Brothers, go forth in peace,
Have courage,
Hold on to what is good,
Return no one evil for evil,
Strengthen the fainthearted,
Support the weak, help the suffering,
Honor all men and women,
Rejoice in the power of the Holy Spirit.
And may the blessing of almighty God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Come down upon you and remain with you for ever and ever and ever.

AMDG

God bless, my Brothers, and Godspeed. And do not be afraid.