FOR THE GREAT CLASS OF 2026
BACCALAUREATE
22 MAY, 2026

"*Put out into deep water…*"
– Luke 5:4b

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Mr. Headmaster Glennon, Members of the Board, Esteemed Members of our Faculty and Staff, Dear Parents, and, most of all, Our Brothers of the Great Class of 2026:

The best part of my job is that I get to do two fun things: I get to honor people and I get to thank them. And there is nothing better – no better job in the world… Sorry, Mr. Glennon, you don't have the best job in the world; I do, but I get to let you have the second best.

Anyway, that is how I would like to begin this homily, by thanking you once again. As I have said repeatedly at the senior dinners, you have invested yourself in this community again and again over these past four years, and it is a better, stronger community because of what you have given. And you have invested yourself in each other as well, which has made each of you better and stronger versions of yourself. Better and stronger because of what you have given. And better and stronger because of what you have received. And please don't ever, ever

underestimate the value of either the giving or the receiving. Both must be remembered in gratitude; both are opportunities for growth. And thank you – thank you one and all – thank you for what you have given, and thank you for what you have received. Georgetown Prep is a better place because you have been here. We offer this Mass – this Eucharist, this thanksgiving – in gratitude for you.

Now, it may just be coincidence, but you may remember Major Christian Smith of the United States Marine Corps, a member of the Class of 2009 – the words that he spoke at yesterday's Senior Awards Breakfast. How he reminded us the importance of the study of Latin here at Prep, and particularly the verb *vocare* – to call or to summon. I swear to you – I promise, he and I did not collude; Dr. Krambuhl will vouch for me that I picked these readings last week.

But maybe it's not a coincidence. Maybe it's because we all need to be reminded that we are all called – you, me, all of us. We are all summoned. Day after day, the people in our lives – our family and our friends, our teachers and our coaches, our directors and our deans – they call us. They ask us to grow. They call us to be our best selves, whether in class or on the stage, on Kairos or in service, on the field or on the court or on the rink or in the pool, in the Chapel or in the Quad – they call us to grow, to become who we are called to be, to become who we

were created to be. But we have to listen for those calls. Because we all know that we can get caught up in ourselves, that we can become complacent or self-absorbed, that we can become deaf to the truth that the world actually needs us, and we can miss the call. We can get caught up in our nets – frequently the nets of our own making – and miss the love, the need, the call, the people right in front of us.

Eli, the ancient high priest about whom we heard in the reading from Samuel, was like that. He had begun his life with great promise, just like you all, with the real possibility of being holy. But he had become fat and happy, self-indulgent and corrupt. And so had many in Israel; they had forgotten who they were, who they were called to be – God's chosen people and a blessing to the nations. And that is why, as the reading began, "the word of the LORD was scarce and vision infrequent" (Samuel 3:1b). Not because God wasn't there or because God wasn't calling but because the people weren't listening. The people weren't looking. But young Samuel…young Samuel heard. He didn't really understand yet, but he heard. And because he listened in the night, because he was ready to do his masters' bidding, he heard. And the story does not end here. Samuel would go on to be the great prophet of Israel, calling the people back to God, and anointing another willing young man, a young man who would slay a giant and become the

shepherd king of Israel, a man who would count among his descendants a carpenter from Nazareth – that man the great King David.

And we heard about Peter in the Gospel. I don't know whether or not Peter was listening when Jesus started preaching. I suspect maybe he wasn't; he'd been out all night after all and hadn't caught anything but junk in his nets – that's why he was cleaning them. And I'll bet he was cold and wet and miserable, and just wanted a nice hot cup of coffee, some breakfast, and a nap.

But somehow when Jesus asked, Peter let Jesus in his boat. Maybe he thought that he'd better be nice to this holy man. It certainly couldn't hurt. But I'm not sure he was thrilled about it; we certainly don't get any enthusiasm when Jesus suggests that they go out fishing – "we've been out all night and haven't caught anything, but if you say so, preacher man."

And yet…and yet…he does go out to the deep water. And everything changes. And for the rest of his life, he keeps going out into the deep water: when he gets called out of the boat for a walk in the storm later on, when he promises to go with Jesus even to death, when he realizes how badly he failed Jesus as a friend, when he ran to the empty tomb half in hope and half in dread, when he walks with the risen Lord on the

beach and repents his failure, when he stands up and proclaims the good news of salvation on Pentecost, when he heals the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, when he travels the Mediterranean to preach the Gospel.

Brothers, if you go to Rome, as I hope one day you will, you'll see the monuments of the mighty emperors – the monuments they built for themselves – those glorious monuments all lie in ruins, and plaques are needed to remind the passers-by who built them. But underneath the largest and most-visited church in the world, there lies the bones of a simple fisherman from Galilee who one day two thousand years ago let a preacher man borrow his boat for an hour or so and then put out into the deep water.

My Brothers, tonight you have a choice – we all do. We can get caught up in our nets, in ourselves, on our phones, with our plans, with our little circle. We can get fat and happy. Self-indulgent. Complacent. Corrupt. Or we can listen, listen in the dark of the night as Samuel did, listen in the cold light of morning as Peter did. If we do – if we are willing to be called – and we all – you, me, all of us – are called – if we are willing to be called, willing to listen, willing to open our eyes and our ears and our hearts to the people and the world around us, we will become who we are called to be.

And do not get me wrong: it sounds very lovely, but some of what we will hear, some of what we will see – it will be hard, challenging, even ugly. But it will ask our response; it will summon us to grow, sometimes even against our will.

The deep can be a scary place. On the ancient maps, at the edge they used to inscribe *Here be monsters*. One can't be complacent. One has to listen and watch and steer carefully out there. But there are great adventures to be had, and exploits of great courage. But most of all, only in the deep can we test ourselves, and find ourselves – who we really are. And that is what God most wants for us – to know who we really are and to know the love with which He creates and sustains us. And to realize that He is always in our boat.

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