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## Christmas Sermon, 1946

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1946

In only a few hours now almost all of us will be going home for Christmas. Temporarily the University will break up into its component parts. For the University family as such, Christmas ends this morning. I suppose that as long as there are academic communities in the world, there will be this waiting for Christmas, this excitement in the air, this sense of expectancy. We are going home for Christmas. Personally I hope you will never quite lose that because I believe that it is one of the few real and honest and holy things left in the modern world. And so as you go, I should like to say just a few words that I would ask you to remember. You are going home today and tomorrow first of all as the children of your parents. Most of us, I know, come from what we call good homes--good physically, morally, socially. As you all know, the word "home" is almost unique in the languages of the world. No other language has a word just like that. It means infinitely more than just a place with doors and windows--a place hallowed by the years, carrying within it the memories of your childhood perhaps. The one place in the world where you are loved not because of what you have done but because you belong there. It can be, even in our century, a vestibule to heaven--a place where all the world is shut out and heaven is shut in. Now psychologists and moralists will tell us and you especially, the younger generation, that love in the modern home is often a very one-sided affair. Parents pour it out and children are often ungrateful. I know that some of you are in this auditorium this morning and at this university only because you have parents who are making sacrifices in order that you can be here. And so I would suggest to you first of all that you remember that as you go home.

Say a word of gratitude and affection during this recess. You should remember that your home too is subject to the laws of time and change and decay--it will not last forever. And it is better, much better as some of us have discovered to say a word to the living than to throw flowers on the graves of the dead. Because, you see, they can't hear you then.

Another obvious thing is that you are going home as sons and daughters of the University. You are all that some people will know about Valparaiso University and I think here now comes the acid test for us all. Some of you have often heard me speak about the difference between the outer compulsion and the inner compulsion. I have tried to point out that the only men and women worth looking at in the world are those driven by an inner compulsion. Now here on a University campus we must have a certain amount of outer compulsion, certain written and unwritten laws, certain regulations and rules by which we try to order our life at the University. But they fall away this afternoon and tomorrow the moment when you leave this campus. You will be free to do pretty well what you want to do. And now there must be a new set of compulsions. An inner must that you can be an honor to the University no matter where you are. That you are still guided by that mysterious light within your soul which can perhaps be lighted by your teachers here but which can be maintained only by yourself. And in that way I really hope, again this Christmas that you will represent the spirit and the dream of the University. Remember always that the school we are trying to build here is just about as old as you are and as young. Grow with it into a greater and fuller life not only in the way Dr. Dittmas suggested

here a few days ago but in all ways--in going out and representing the pioneering spirit in your own life which this school is trying to represent. As I hear Dr. Dittmar here in this auditorium the other morning, I recalled an old legend that is still being told in the Eastern Orthodox Church. When Lucifer, the sun of the morning, had been cast out of heaven for the sin of pride, somebody asked him, "What do you miss most of all the things you lost when you lost heaven?" Lucifer answered "The thing I miss the most of all is the sound of the trumpets in the morning." And so sometimes I believe that you and I can say that the thing that we must keep and the thing that we must not forget is the sound of trumpets in the morning. The courage and the hope and the adventure which will make your life and the life of the University a steady march toward a better tomorrow.

And so now you are going home for Christmas. During the next few days the song that you will hear more than any other is the song we sang again this morning:

"Silent night, holy night

All is calm, all is bright."