

5-25-2017

2017 Baccalaureate Mass Homily

Michael J. Rogers S.J.
College of the Holy Cross

Follow this and additional works at: https://crossworks.holycross.edu/bacc_homily

Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rogers, Michael J. S.J., "2017 Baccalaureate Mass Homily" (2017). *Baccalaureate Mass Homilies*. 4.
https://crossworks.holycross.edu/bacc_homily/4

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Commencement Speeches at CrossWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Baccalaureate Mass Homilies by an authorized administrator of CrossWorks.

Baccalaureate Mass Homily



Thursday, May 25, 2017

Rev. Michael J. Rogers, S.J. '02

On July 25, 1849, the students who were to graduate from Holy Cross walked around campus singing “Home Sweet Home.” One of the students noted that “I was quite melancholy, and walked about all alone until bedtime thinking of tomorrow.” Ok... maybe that is a little melodramatic, and I hope that none of you feels the same way tonight. That day was what today is, the eve of graduation. In this particular case, it was the eve of the first graduation. I suspect that the festivities of tonight won’t be accompanied with a song popular in the mid 19th century, but will rather give way to the likes of of music by Kendrick Lamar, Bruno Mars, Taylor Swift, and that-- perhaps in the most sentimental of moments--the song “Don’t Stop Believing” will be sung with all of the volume you can muster. The truth is, though, that the feeling today is the same as it was 168 years ago. I know that this is true because I remember a night 15 years ago when I had the same feelings. Just as was the case in 1849, and in 2002, today, tonight, and tomorrow will be filled with those same strange feelings of joy and exultation tinged with perhaps just a smidge of melancholy, where all of those songs blend into the old melody of “Home Sweet Home,” because, as excited as you all are for all that is to come, this place has been home. Here is the hitch, though, these four years have hopefully taught you that you weren’t meant to stay at home.

Four years ago your parents learned this lesson as they pulled their cars up to Wheeler, Mulledy, and Hanselman halls. You weren’t made for your childhood home, so you set off on your own for the first time in your lives, and made this place your new home in your friends, in the things that you were grateful for, and in the ways that it challenged you. 4 years ago you accepted an invitation to something new, and you left your childhood home to become a part of a community that would become a home to you. Now today once again, the same instinct that was in your hearts four years ago should be there. You weren’t made to stay at home, you were made for something more.

That instinct is perhaps driven by the need to respond to what you’ve learned. Just like the Apostle John, who had spent three years with Jesus, affirmed of his own experience of growth and learning at the feet of his teacher, the whole world likely couldn’t contain the books that would need to be written to hold what you all have learned. Dinand Library wouldn’t be enough to hold the stories of how you have learned not just Calculus and Philosophy, Art and Theology, Languages and Social Sciences, but hopefully also how you have learned to be a good human being, how to be a good friend, a good listener, how to be intellectually curious and ethically grounded, to appreciate and savor what is good, true, and beautiful, and to be grateful for it to the One who gives it all to us. This campus might not be big enough to hold what you know, but you know that, and know that you’re not meant for home.

Today is the solemnity of the Ascension, that day when Jesus and the disciples parted ways so that their mission to all of the ends of the earth could begin. Just as it was for them, today your mission begins. It is time to take what you’ve learned on this mountain top and go out with it to the world, just as Jesus commands us in the Gospel. You aren’t meant to stay home, you’re meant to go. Go into the whole world, shining forth the light of all that these years have taught you, letting the fruits of all that you have learned and experienced here flourish into the works of peace and justice which manifest the love of the God who sends you. You’re not meant to stay home.

It is our deepest hope, as Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians today, that the eyes of your hearts have been enlightened in these four years. It is our hope that, because of this, you don’t spend too long looking up to the sky as the disciples did in the first reading, but look down to the road beneath your feet which compels you forward into the world in the sure and certain knowledge that this place can no longer hold all that you know. You are not meant to stay home.

And yet, home remains that place where, to borrow a line from Robert Frost, “when you have to go there, They have to take you in.” Many of you may well return, as many of us have, to this hill with stories to tell of all that you’ve seen and done, conscious of the eyes that this place gave you to see, and the ears that it gave you to hear. When you return, in joy for reunions, or in moments of sorrow or confusion, this place will be here. In your joys, you might be back to celebrate weddings and baptize your children. In your sorrows, this place will be here in prayer and as a community to support you. When you have to come here, we have to take you in, because you are and always will be one of our own. Purple blood runs deep, but deeper still flows the bonds of lives well lived, imbued with the meaning born of finding God in all things, and paying that love forward in concern for others, particularly the poorest, weakest and most vulnerable. Let these be ties which bind you all as you leave this place, and by which this place will always be home.