

The Lord be with you.

For those of us who follow the Church Calendar, we are approaching Pentecost Sunday. How appropriate to exhort you in a time when much of the ecclesiastical world is preparing to celebrate the divine fire poured out by God upon his Church. Pentecost is God empowering an infant Church to grow up in wisdom and maturity. Pentecost is the magnum opus of divine assistance. And you—especially at this crucial stage in your life—are embarking on a similar journey. You are to pursue maturity and wisdom through the power of the Spirit. In many ways, you are infants in your life experience. Yet, you have been given a titanic head-start in your preparation. You have been equipped to see the world through new eyes, to consider ideas and to weigh them by the Word of the Lord, to analyze books, to place truth far above all things, and to consider your Creator in the days of your youth.

You have been protected by fathers and mothers who have given a great deal of time to ensure that you succeed in this endeavor. By God's grace, you have learned the virtue of gratitude; you have learned that isolationism is the virtue of the devil, and that only a healthy community can provide the type of environment to carry you through life faithfully.

Again, by God's grace, you have realized what C.S. Lewis so simply observed:

“God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.”

So you have come this far by the grace of God, but now what? What can you expect? How are you going to be defined now that you are no longer a student at Trinitas? What kind of people will you be?

Hebrews 12 gives us a simple outline of what you are to embody as you leave this great school.

First, you are called to be fearless. You are not a part of a creation that thrives on fear. Hebrews says that the Old Creation was so filled with fear that even Moses trembled. [At Sinai, there were] the sounds of musical instruments, darkness, a tempest, and the voice of God himself, terrifying to the listeners. But you have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of self-control. So, graduates: be fearless. Be fearless of narratives that hate God. Be fearless of them because the framers of these narratives had to sit on God's lap before they could argue against His existence.

Be fearless of this world. This world is God's, and it is filled with his glory. Be fearless of the world by avoiding worldliness, youthful lusts, and ungodliness. Be fearless, and do not tremble at the latest philosophies—for they will all pass away—and you will be left standing at the end of the day. Though you may be physically and emotionally scarred by the assaults of the ungodly, your name will be added to those who have quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, and put foreign armies to flight. Be fearless of all things, but fear God—fear him with a holy passion, because in the fear of Him is the wisdom to be fearless in this world.

Secondly, you are called to holy submission. Hebrews says that you are not to refuse him who is speaking. Jesus is the architect of your faith. He is the one who speaks your orders. He is the captain of

the Christian army, the host of this grandiose gathering, which includes innumerable angels, the elect in heaven, and even God himself.

From the fearful nature of the Old Creation where darkness reigned, you are now members of a New Creation where the brightness of Jesus permeates everything. The First Creation was shaken and it crumbled. The New Creation, under Jesus Christ, cannot be shaken. She has been ordered to act in utter submission to Her Lord.

So, too, you must always submit. And in this submission you are called to die. The more you submit, the more you die that death. The less you submit, the greater the misery of life. Submission to your calling as a Christ-follower is the antithesis of worldly education. True education, godly education—which you have received here at Trinitas—and which you will continue to follow from now on, is training for death. Bonhoeffer said that “Jesus Christ and his call are necessarily our death as well as our life.” Your calling is to be a part of this innumerable mass of martyrs, angels, forefathers, and all those who have gone before us, to enter in and to accept with honor the call to die to your longings and passions, and to submit to the One who makes all our longings and passions worthwhile. Rosenstock-Huessy once said: “The martyr does not obtain the victory personally, but his group, his successors, wins in the long run.” So, live for future victory.

Finally, Hebrews tells us to live in perpetual worship. And this is crucial. Even if you do not get the first two points, do not forget this last exhortation. Hebrews 12 concludes with these words:

“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”

What kind of legacy will you leave this world when you are long gone? What kind of legacy will you leave your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, your wife, your husband, your friends, your neighbors? Your intellectual genius will long be forgotten. Your rhetorical abilities to prove X over Y will be forgotten. If you are united to Christ, then at the end of your life, only one question will truly matter: “Have I lived each part of my life in perpetual worship?” How will you answer this question? How will you leave a legacy that is substantive, meaningful, tangible, and spiritual for your offspring? You can carry your intellect with you until death. You can carry your wealth with you until death. But if these things are divorced from a life of perpetual worship at work, at home, in playing, in reading, in intellectualizing, in philosophizing, and most importantly, in the context of the Church, I say this with all seriousness: “Your life will be a waste.” But as Paul says, “I expect greater things from you.”

Let us offer to God acceptable worship, because He is the consuming fire, the consuming Pentecost. And only in Him do we move, and breathe, and have our being. Graduates: Be fearless of what may come. Engage it using all the ammunition you have received. Be submissive to Jesus Christ. Honor him with your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And finally, worship well, so that the One who is a consuming fire may grant you the status of “Good and Faithful Servant.” Congratulations on your accomplishment. Live well to the glory of God.

In The Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.