



Divine Institutions - A Baccalaureate Address

Graduates and others honored to be here at this occasion. I would like to begin my brief address with a question. Why does a clergyman traditionally speak at a baccalaureate service or in an academic setting such as this? Did you ever wonder? Why bother with religion? Well, I am not a religious person, but I can answer the question.

Our nation was founded on godly principles, not atheistic principles as the present communistic state in the Soviet Union. Also, our country was not founded on religious principles but Christian principles that proceeded out of the Word of God, the Bible.

Our country in its official documents recognizes the sovereignty of God. Our country in its creeds recognizes the existence of God, such as the well-known Flag Salute, "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Our country in its official coinage has the inscription, "In God we Trust" and this has appeared billions of times as an affirmation of our faith in deity. Our country guarantees freedom of worship, that is worship on a voluntary basis without coercion or slavery.

And in this freedom, the Senior Class (without outside influence) chooses on the basis of the good old democratic process who will speak to them to the point, in the good old American tradition - stand up, talk up, and then shut up.

And so as a clergyman, I represent the country from the standpoint of Christianity and the viewpoint of our spiritual heritage. Others today will represent some section of the government of our country, some aspect of the academics of our country, or even other phases. But, we look on the fruits of academic provision We commemorate it today in the good old tradition. Why? Freedom.

You who graduate today have had the freedom to invite the speakers you want, the freedom of having an audience assemble and give respectful attention to what is said, the freedom to graduate, the freedom to pursue the area of your interest, to live life to the full as long as you do not violate the privacy, property, and rights of your fellow man.

Where did all this freedom come from? The freedom to be appointed to the great Naval Academy as is possible, or to discontinue school as others may. Where did it come from? Can we take it for granted? Many nations of the world do not have it.

We ultimately trace freedom back to Christianity, a dynamic relationship with Christ through personal faith in Him. And then, the Divine Institutions that keep us strong as individuals, as a nation, that guarantees that our rights will be preserved. There are four Divine Institutions:

The first is Freedom. To us it means the freedom to choose, the freedom to drive "X" brand of car across the USA, to buy "X" brand of motorcycle. The freedom to go up the river, or go down to the beach. But, ultimately, this Divine Institution guarantees the freedom to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior or in fairness, to reject Him, to have nothing to do with Christianity. But, be fair to this Divine Institution.

The second is Marriage. To explain this vast subject, graduating class, I'll have to claim your class motto, "The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer." It is impossible for me to elaborate here, except to say that God created one Adam, and one Eve. ...not one Adam and a half dozen Eve's or vice versa. God has ordained marriage but as a minister for 20 years, I've seen more heartache



in this area than any other area of life. So bide your time, and when you men make the identification, make sure it is the right one and about 50% of your troubles will be averted. Otherwise you can know the slavery of wrong man/wrong woman.

The third Divine Institution is Family. God ordained families for affection, love, protection, discipline, security and many other things. Many of you were taught respect for authority, respect for property, respect for the privacy of others, how to work, do an honest day's work, to do the unpleasant, to never give up. And, even though, at times things got a bit gross. I am reminded of the 18 year old graduate that looked his Dad straight in the eye just before going to college and said... "Thanks, Dad, for 18 wonderful years."

The last of the four Divine Institutions is Government. Democracy may have its weak points, but democracy has made this the greatest nation in the world. I am an American and you are an American. Our ancestors have come from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and other backgrounds. America is a fantastic melting pot but she has been graced out by God with a government that after nearly 200 years still has a great deal of freedom. The freedom to sing "God Bless America." The freedom to assembly in the church of our choice or to sleep all day Sunday. The freedom to go see Grandma on a Sunday afternoon. The freedom to drive from Brookings to New York City without any checkpoints.

So, you have it. That is why a clergyman still has the honor and privilege of ministering to a group of honored graduates. To remind us of the spiritual heritage of our nation, to pause to remember why we are truly a great nation and free, to realize what we have and hold as Americans ...these are the reasons.

I cannot help but quote the end of that great speech delivered before the Virginia convention so long ago by the brilliant Patrick Henry; "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" Freedom and liberty in Christ are worth preserving!