

Let Everyday Be Today

- *Baccalaureate Mass*
- *May 17, 2013*
- *Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.*

I was thinking why each of you who are graduating tomorrow from Law School as well as you who are family members or friends decided to come this evening to the Chapel of St. Ignatius for this religious service. I doubt that most of you are Catholics. But still you came. Perhaps it was an instance of wanting to be together with your classmates. Or perhaps at last to be together for once in this chapel which is world-renowned for its architecture and beauty. Maybe some of you have come along just because it was on the schedule, so you didn't know quite what you were in for but looked forward to processing down from Sullivan Hall to here and just came along.

Maybe all of that is true, and that is fine, but I am guessing that a deeper motivation, perhaps unclear to you, has led you along. It's a very simple thing of wanting to stop, especially to stop after the flurry and pressures of Law School and exams, and to be still and quiet and together for a while before the celebration, and speeches, and call of your name, and the walk across the stage in Key Arena tomorrow.

I am guessing that something deeper in you than all of this movement and something more personal and needed than the activity of the weekend has attracted you here... and if it hasn't, at least you are here now and you can stop. I think we all want to mark more deeply the truly important moments of our lives, to stop, to be aware of the meaning of the moment, to savor it, to be thankful and hopeful and loving before moving into a new era in our lives.

The scriptural writer has it right: there is indeed "an appointed time for everything under heaven": there is an appointed time to be born and to die, a time to plant and to uproot, a time to build and a time to tear down, a time to laugh and a time to weep, a time to scatter stones and to gather them, a time to seek and a time to lose, a time of war and a time of peace, a time to speak and a time to be silent. So too there is an appointed time for you for each part of this weekend. What is the appointed time for you right now?

You may have your own way of answering that, your own need and desire for what this Law School Baccalaureate Mass in the Chapel of St. Ignatius should be for you. If so, simply follow that, or better, simply allow it. May I suggest to you that there is the possibility of stopping, of being silent, being at peace, being composed, finding yourself at home, and breaking through to a fullness which is contained in this weekend and in this moment. This fullness is contained not on the surface or in the noise and activity, but beneath the surface, in the well of yourself, the place from which your life flows. Isn't it true that we stop and savor too little the fullness of meaning, the richness of life, in all of the moments of life and especially in the big moments, the turning point moments as this one is for you?

It is the profession of poets to evoke this deeper life and fullness. It is present in any poem, but sometimes it is more explicitly articulated in some poems. Here's one from a Jesuit poet, Bill Rewak, that more explicitly expresses this:

JUMBLE!

I'm caught in a jumble
a forest of crackling leaves
branches swing with a screech
crows are squawking
falls roar into the deep
and bears crunch their way
with loud yawns
and unsparing tread

jackhammers readying the land
and locomotives blaring
across midnight

I've been taught
to turn aside
and deepen silence

there's the rub

the stridency of all
that is good

how do we dig down
listen to the music
that was planted
crack the code

and accept the lilting joy?

We are all caught in a jumble, a stridency not of what is bad, but of all that is good. Can we turn aside in the midst of the achievement and congratulations, can we deepened the silence, can we dig down, can we listen to the music that was planted in our very life, can we crack the code of our own being... and can we accept the lilting joy? There is indeed an appointed time for everything under heaven. And in every appointed time, there is, so to speak, a heaven under the time if we listen, allow, accept.

I say this to you today because I believe this music or lilting joy is none other than the grace of God in us, the life of God flowing in the depths of our own unique life. I speak of this to you today because such a big moment as this weekend is by its nature a before and an after. It deserves a present, a now. I also speak of this today to you because I know that your lives of work, of lawyering, of service, of making a living and giving a living to others will be very busy, will be filled with “the stridency of all that is good” and there is nothing more I could hope or pray for you than that you nurture your own life, listen to your own music, daily crack the code of your being, accept the lilting joy of your life, and of God’s life in you. Any living which does not do this is neither a fullness of living nor a living of one’s own unique life. You need this daily stopping and listening, however you do it, and the vocation you pursue beyond this weekend needs you with all your true life animating that vocation.

The gospel or good news we heard read today ends with Jesus of Nazareth, who has come home to Nazareth, saying: “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” Today, not before, not yesterday; today, not after, not tomorrow, today.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”

Isn’t “today” probably the very best word in the English language? Today is the only thing we want and the only thing we have. Today is the only place where there is life, and presence, and love, and all else we cherish. (The Christian belief is that Jesus of Nazareth is the “Today of God”... but that should be saved for another time.) At this appointed time, together in this chapel which itself embodies in shape and color the beauty and texture of graced life, it is enough—for whatever reason we came—to be here, to enjoy more deeply the moment, to commit ourselves to a moment of fullness every day, to let every day be a today of fulfillment of the good news of our life.

Poetry is like sifting or gold-panning; it needs a repeated shake. Let me end with one more shake of Bill Rewak's "Jumble!"

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