

A Valedictory to Our Graduates

My dear graduates —

As you complete one phase of your life which school authorities rate a reasonable success through the conferral of a diploma or degree, and as you commence a new chapter, I want you to know that your bishop wishes you life's very best.

If, during the years that are summed up in the day of graduation, you have done more than accumulate knowledge, if you have learned true wisdom, you should be asking yourselves now some profound questions. I hope that one of these questions will be a paraphrase of John F. Kennedy's famous words: not what can the world do for me, but what can I do for the world?

What can you do for the world? In reply, I take my cue from the most beautiful valedictory ever uttered — the beautiful priestly prayer which Jesus addressed to His Father at the Last Supper. Among other things, He prayed that "the world may believe" and that "men may be one."

I pray, then, that you go forth from your school with a deep sense of faith and with a deep sense of dedication to the unity and peace of our divided and war-torn world.

Jesus prayed that "the world may believe." What does it mean to believe? What is faith? There are many ways of describing it. One way is to say that faith is the power in us that moves us to face the essential problem of human life — which is

the problem of meaning. Henry James was once asked the question: "What is life?" His answer was a cynical one: "Life is the predicament that precedes death." In much the same vein Albert Camus wrote: "There is only one serious philosophical problem and that is suicide." And, of course, Camus is right, if life is simply "a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." If such be the case, then suicide is the logical escape; it is the only reasonable response to ultimate absurdity.

Christian faith, on the other hand, is a resounding affirmation that Jesus Christ lives and, because of Him, life has meaning. For the person who really believes the really serious problem in life is not suicide, but martyrdom: namely, what is it that I am willing to live for and, if needs be, to die for?

Faith affirms a meaning — an ultimate meaning — in life, not a meaning that man proves but a meaning that he experiences; not a meaning that he creates, but a meaning that he becomes involved in; not simply a meaning that he grasps, but a meaning that grasps him.

That is why faith is always accompanied by a sense of dependence, an acknowledgment of transcendence, of God. I do not ultimately give meaning to my life; rather meaning is something that I am given. For this reason faith is not only accompanied by a sense of dependence; it is also accompanied by the conviction that something is being asked of me. It is accompanied by the conviction that I have been called — not only to be, but to be something and to be for something.

Dag Hammarskjöld expressed this thought most forcefully in his own affirmation of faith: "At some moment I did answer Yes to Someone or Something and from that hour I was certain that existence is meaningful and that, therefore, my life in self-surrender had a goal."

One of the most important goals that faith calls us to today is a dedication to unity and peace. Jesus prayed to His Father: "that they may be one, as thou Father in me and I in Thee, that they may be one in us. Despite the fact that centuries of Christian tradition have reluctantly — indeed sometimes not so reluctantly — sanctioned war as a legitimate instrument for the settling of international disputes, we would hope that your generation will be the first generation that will outlaw war. What we hope from you is that by whatever means there are at your disposal — through legislation, through support of honest conscientious objection, through personal witness in whatever ways are open to you, you will be the peace-generation, that will help to convince your world that men must become one or perish. This is no easy task and I have no simple program to offer you. I do know this; you cannot work for peace unless you are living at peace in your own lives — a peace that comes from a faith that is active in love.

I pray for you on this day which is the first day of the rest of your life, that you celebrate life each day as God's grace and gift to you, to be shared in loving concern for others, always remembering that if you are not part of the solution of the troubles that afflict us, you become an addition to the problems.

The Slot Man

By Carmen Viglucci

Memorial Day . . . Let's Never Forget

Jack Fitzgerald and Joe and Ed Zaloga went off and got themselves killed for something called the United States of America.



Admittedly when they did their things they didn't calculate the importance or the worth of what they were doing. Their country was in trouble and they answered — not with rhetoric, not with logic, not with rationale, but with their lives.

Jack Fitzgerald was killed when he was just 18 in something called the "war to make the world safe for democracy." Perhaps he wouldn't have thought of

it that way but he defied his father, joined up, wrote home to "Dear Ma", assuring her everything was the "cat's pajamas", and got himself shot through the head.

A generation later, "serious" Ed Zaloga and his carefree little brother Joe went off in "Jeeps" and ships and ended up killed in a "war to end all wars."

The world hasn't accommodated itself to their sacrifices. Wars still are fought for similar reasons and other Jacks, Eds and Joes are being denied the simple reward of living a little while.

But because of Fitzgerald and the Zalogas and countless others like them, I resent the hell out of hearing Memorial Day described as a "chauvinist holiday devoted to war." And I have heard that.

It is a day set aside to remember and revere those who have paid the bill for the right of the rest of us to speak our minds.

I personally think that if the world keeps turning to war as a solution for difficulties then the importance of what these men died for is diminished.

I also personally think it is sacrilegious if we, under the stress of an unsavory war, lump together the graves of Flanders, Normandy and Arlington as targets along with those we see as perpetrating the present conflict.

We may not like this war but let us be selective in our criticism.

I am sure no one wants to demean Jack Fitzgerald or Ed and Joe Zaloga. Or all the others who have laid down their lives for their friends.

Editorial

The Summit Talks

One of the most perplexing problems these days is trying to make rational judgments about the spate of momentous world events, reproducing in almost geometric proportions.

The latest such happening is the summit meeting in Moscow where the heads of two great nations, virtually at war in Vietnam, sit down over champagne and discuss other problems.

Those who judge such a meeting with cynicism certainly have justification.

Those who flatly oppose any rapprochement with the archetype of atheistic, Communist government also have logic and rationale for their viewpoint.

While such an implausible meeting causes consternation among the peoples

of the two nations directly involved, imagine the tremors it causes in such lands as North and South Vietnam, who now must see themselves as expendable pawns in a larger chess game.

So on the surface it is easy to condemn the talks on any of several principles.

Yet the faint thread of hope for the future the meeting represents is desperately needed by this troubled world. Pope Paul VI in his Pentecost Sunday talk referred to this hope in praying that the meeting would be worthwhile.

There are aspects of the nuclear arms pact which will deserve scrutiny and very careful scrutiny for our national good. Yet even the fact that these two nations are able to discuss such a troublesome

and complex issue is a step toward world harmony.

Then, the agreements in such areas as cancer and heart disease cooperation, environmental control and joint space ventures could reap fantastic results in the battle against some of mankind's age-old plagues.

Joint space ventures are significant not only for their potential for knowledge but also for the peaceful cooperation they will engender.

So the talks must shape up as another of those paradoxes besetting our times. Regardless of their ultimate merit they strike an uneasy chord in many of our breasts for they show the helplessness of individuals in the face of world power collaboration.