

Graduation 2017

Dear Graduates,

Before I get to my actual charge to the Class of 2017, I would like to share a funny story with you. It has to do with Mrs. Fallon. So I think it will really resonate with you. In fact, since our dear Mrs. Fallon has been our 5th Grade teacher for over 20 years, this story should strike a tender spot for most of you here.

Every year, on the last day of school before Christmas, we hold a faculty luncheon for all the teachers. At one point, my wife was talking to Mrs. Fallon and Denise must have said something like, "Well how do you think my husband is doing?" Mrs. Fallon said, "Oh, I would give him an A+." But then she paused and smiled and said, "But you know, some people have called me an Easy Grader." Easy grader or not, I'll gladly take an A+ from Mrs. Fallon.

Okay, on to the more serious remarks.

My college *alma mater* has been using the marketing slogan, "Dare to be great." Dare to be great. I remember when I first saw it, I thought it was cliché and I felt unsatisfied. I wanted something a little more from my *alma mater*--something more Catholic or something more culturally significant.

Well it turns out that the Dare to be Great slogan was inspired from a quote for Pope Benedict XVI where he said, "*The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.*"

Now this is a very nice quote. It connects the notion of hardship to the notion of greatness. But there is still something unsatisfying, especially with leaving the notion of greatness ambiguous. What does Pope Benedict mean when he says greatness. This is very uncharacteristic of Benedict.

Well it turns out that no one has been able to find these exact words in the words and writings of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI. No doubt that he probably said something very much like this.

Here the closest thing he said like this. It comes from his encyclical *Spe Salvi* paragraph 33:

The human person was created for greatness—because the person was created for God himself; the person is created to be filled by God. But if his heart is too small for the greatness, it must be stretched. “By delaying [his gift], God strengthens our desire; through desire he enlarges our soul and by expanding it he increases its capacity [for receiving him]”.

Now here is the Pope Benedict that we know and love. In the official Latin version of the encyclical, greatness is more specifically rendered as *magna realitatem*--a great reality. We are created for a great reality--God Himself. And the notion of needing to be stretched in order to accommodate God is in line with St. Thomas Aquinas and his concept of magnanimity. Thomas says, “Magnanimity by its very name denotes stretching forth of the soul to great things.”

As noted last night and earlier, there is no doubt you will face hardship and even persecution. This is God stretching us for a great reality.

Here at Holy Family, we have tried to stretch you with Truth--keep pursuing the Truth, keep pursuing knowledge no matter what field you choose. We have tried to stretch you with Beauty--keep close to the liturgy, keep close to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We have tried to stretch you with Goodness--keep pursuing virtue, keep strengthening your habits for the Good.

And so to send you off from Holy Family, I say Class of 2017, you are truly made for a great reality. Let God strengthen your desire. Let God stretch your hearts. God will give you the capacity for him. And God will give you His great reality.

Thank you and May God Bless each of you always.