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Speech
1944

Address to be delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second Rhode Island Congressional District, at the Commencement Exercises at Mount Saint Charles Academy, Woonsocket, Rhode Island, on June 16, 1944.

No matter how many years you may be spared to inhabit this mortal sphere - regardless of how often you may thrill to the knowledge of success in some chosen field - you will never again know a day of such complete happiness as this which is yours today.

This day will live with you forever. Because of it - and because of the weeks and months you have spent here - you will always have deep in your heart a love that will never be replaced - love for your very own Mount Saint Charles.

Many times in your journey through this vale of tears you will recall the greatness of this day - and often you will draw on the memory of this grand occasion - for the courage and determination you will need to carry on in the face of life's varying fortunes.

It is not too easy to speak to you men of life as it is today. There is no thrilling feeling of exaltation as I express to you the world's invitation to take your stations in the ranks of the great family of men.

Would that I could speak to you of great accomplishments of science - of the arts. Would that I could paint for you a bright hued picture of the peaceful and prosperous world which beckons just outside yonder door.

But, were I to do that, I would have failed in my duty to you. You would have met disillusionment in your first contact with a man of the world in which you are about to take your place.

No - we must speak of sterner things - and there is one thing of which we all can be certain - though the good Brothers have taught you to understand and appreciate the finer things of life, they have taught you also in these halls and on the playing fields of the Mount - to face reality - to be real men.

You men - the graduates of 1944 - look upon a world that challenges in every ticking second - all the ideals you have acquired at the feet of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.

You see a world shaken to its very vitals - by the perverted minds of men who, riding the iron monsters of death and destruction, have sought to wipe out every last vestige of honor and decency. Truth has been scorned, and man's honor has been turned into a mere creature of a ruling political power. Concerted and diligent effort has been made to sever the bonds which have held society together through the ages.

The spoken word - the written phrase - has not been man's bond - but has become instead a mere instrument - a tool - to stand as long as it will serve the purpose of the moment - to be cast aside when the occasion demands.

Those places which you have been taught to revere as shrines of culture and learning are being reduced to heaps of formless rubble. The priceless objects of art - before which generations of men and women have stood with bated breath - are considered fit objects for the plunder of sadistic robbers.

The great universities of Europe are cold and still. Their halls - where once trod learned teachers and eager students of philosophy - of the arts - of science and the law - now echo to the clanking arms of the Prussian Guard - to whom all this collection of the learning of centuries is but the idle ramblings of stupid old men.

The tongues which resounded throughout the world from Europe's shores - exhorting all men to greater knowledge - are today silent and dumb. Tomes and treatises - priceless manuscripts upon which Holy men labored to keep alive the culture of man through the murky fog of the Dark Ages - are but smoldering heaps amid the ashes of their battered libraries.

Sacred shrines - dedicated for all time to the worship of man's Creator - become nameless and formless - under the iron tread of crushing armies, locked in battle to the death - and all this the product of man's inhumanity to man.

Man's inventive genius, spurred on by the need to kill or be killed, mounts to its greatest heights in devising new instruments of death and destruction.

The economic machinery of the world depends for its functioning on the prosecution of the war, and the political world is seemingly inextricably tangled in the conflicting purposes and aims for which most of the civilized world is in arms.

The idea that might makes right - the pride of power and the lust for conquest - stand opposed to respect for the rights of human beings.

Realism and materialism are aligned against the Divinely inspired dignity of the individual man.

Into such a world you are invited - more, into such a world you must enter, whether you will or no. In such a world you must take your stand on the side of right and justice - or on the side of power - of might - of expediency.

Many men of my generation have grown cynical, and hold out little hope for the future. Men of an older generation grow weary at the seemingly endless blood-lettings - and some there are who are prone to look with contempt on all suggestions for correcting the evils which beset mankind.

Those there are - both of mine and elder generations - who, propounding suggestions for the future ordering of society, treat the problems of Nations as though they were the squabbles of children - and wrapping themselves in noble phrases as a beggar would enfold himself in the purple of Emperors - scatter solutions about on every hand.

With all this, too, you must reckon. None of this can you avoid.

That these things are happening is a shocking indictment of past generations. That it shall never happen again is the resolve which must be yours.

We who are responsible for today are determined, insofar as we are able, that we shall lay a foundation upon which can be built a better world. You - and the children you will help to educate - will be the mechanics who must erect the structure. You can build what you will.

In the creation of a future it matters little how well grounded a young man might be in the arts and sciences - how great may be his knowledge of history or how keen his

ability to penetrate the mazes of intricate mathematics - he will succeed, in his primary mission on earth only if he believes, down deep in his heart, in the fundamental principles of life - in the essential teachings of Christian Doctrine, which you men have learned from the mouths of these Holy men. Unless your belief is such that you are in truth a soldier of the Faith, you will be seduced by the siren song that all that matters is the moment in which we live.

You men know that this mortal life is not an end in itself - but only the means by which we may achieve our ultimate goal. This is the belief that has gone into the making of your character. This is the knowledge that makes you strong.

To one with such a character, all else becomes easy and he explores the labyrinth of time with confidence - to one who is devoid of that foundation, all things conspire to deceive and destroy. He is unable to withstand the onslaughts of an outrageous fortune. He becomes cynical and eventually an unbeliever - in God - in truth - in himself.

Into your minds has been poured the gleanings of the accumulated learning of man from the beginning of time. The followers of Pere Coindre have lavished upon you the product of the skills - the intellects - of all the Brothers of the Sacred Heart since 1821. Into the mind and heart of each one of you has gone some little bit of every one of these noble men of God. As you walk from this great Catholic Institution, today - you take with you the undying love and devotion of the Brothers.

In you they have sought to instill a love of the Eternal God - which alone can be man's inspiration to duty and sacrifice - from which springs his love of country and home and family - which makes of him a real citizen. Without it he becomes but a reviler of those sacred institutions without which the America we cherish cannot survive.

You are the products of great teachers. You are their promise of a brighter tomorrow.

You enter a world that challenges your future - where danger lurks at every step - but danger gleams like sunshine to the brave man's eye. You will be tempted, seriously -

- - be resolute - be strong. You have the wisdom of the ages laid out before you. All the education of all the men since the beginning of time has contributed to making you the men you are today.

I invite you to make a definite contribution to the age in which you live. Be teachers - Be leaders of men. No matter what walk of life may call to you - no matter what may be your chosen field of endeavor - there will always be offered you the opportunity to contribute something of what you are toward the welfare of your fellow man.

By your example - by your positive action - inspire others to reach for the heights toward which your spirits soar.

Champion the cause of Justice and Truth - Bring Christ with you as you travel among men. Teach your fellow man that success lies in the universal brotherhood of man - that peace can be had - that security can be ours - that under God all men are entitled to that peace and security.

Live Bravely - Live Boldly - Build for yourselves a new world.

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Hon. John E. Fogarty, M. C.,
Rm. 1515, House Office Bldg.,
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