

Address delivered by Congressman John E. Fogarty, 2nd Rhode Island District, at the Commencement Exercises of St. Mary's Academy - Bay View, on June 7, 1950.

It is a great satisfaction for a man in public life to speak to a graduating class in this year of Our Lord, 1950. It is impossible to face you and not recall to mind the great thrill I enjoyed on my commencement day at LaSalle in Providence.

I know I faced a new world with great confidence. I looked forward, with great zeal, to the opportunity which was mine, to carve out a place in life for myself and my loved ones.

I know you possess the same self-confidence and I am sure you are eager to get on with the job of winning your place in the American scheme of life.

But, today, I am doubly pleased in speaking to you, because I am conscious of the fact that you are equipped with a kind of education which this land of ours sorely needs.

I am quite anxious to offer you assurance that there is a place for each of you. You can profit greatly by the many scientific and technological developments which have come about since the day when your good parents left high school. Diligent application to the development of the knowledge and skill necessary to understand thoroughly the type of work you will select, can bring you wealth and social position. There is still plenty of room for ability - plenty of reward for effort.

But, I would like to suggest that in addition to these material things which are yours if you seek them - because of the type of education which you have received, there is a splendid opportunity for you to consider the service you can render to your country, through a life well lived.

If you will concentrate your energies on the contribution you can make

to your homeland rather than on what you can compel that homeland to do for you - you will know the greatest of all satisfactions.

You are moving out in a world which has grown accustomed to hearing statesmen, educators and others to whom we naturally look for leadership, place major emphasis upon the importance of material things. We no longer experience a sense of shock when all the standards to which men must conform are expressed in purely material terms - and all the goals for which men must strive are presented as strictly material ones.

But, many of us know that this emphasis on material things comes from a lack of appreciation of the fundamental things which alone make this life worthwhile.

Here at Bayview Seminary you have learned from the good sisters that there is far more in life than a fancy frock and the finest of food.

You know that man conforms to the rules of right conduct because of the love of God - rather than because of a fear of detection and punishment.

You have come to know that man is not an automaton - or a rag doll, but a creature of a Divine being - provided by God with a conscience - a mind that can know truth if it will seek it - and a free will.

Such individuals have built here a free society - a democracy which sorely needs the inspiration - the right thinking - which you can bring to it.

You have noticed in your classes here - you have read in the newspapers, and you have learned from your parents - that this democracy of which we are so boastful is under attack from many quarters.

Abroad there are willing and determined enemies of our concept of society who seek to ridicule our system of government whenever an opportunity is afforded.

Our efforts to aid former allies are termed militaristic and

empire-building tactics.

Our efforts to relieve the tax burden on our own citizens, by helping a beaten people to its feet, are branded selfish and vicious.

Some nations whom we would help frequently demonstrate such a keen interest in their own immediate concerns, that they would leave the entire task of preserving freedom everywhere to the American people.

At home we have a most confused and bewildered body politic.

Though there are natural worries rising out of the application of man's scientific and technological skill to the development of horrible weapons of fearful destruction - it seems to me that most of the confusion develops as a result of the many conflicting pronouncements by men in public life. They come from men who have been chosen to serve the public, but who seem to find more entertainment, perhaps seeking personal aggrandizement, in castigating other public officials, who likewise were chosen to serve.

The Founding Fathers proclaimed, in the immortal Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident - that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness".

It has appeared to me sometimes, that many leading Americans have forgotten, or never read, these words of the brave and honest who set about the establishment in this new world of a new concept of the society of men.

It would seem that there are some in public life who care so little for democracy in the true sense - that they would see it destroyed rather than pass up an opportunity to gain political advantage. Some appear to place so low a value on the character of their fellow American - they will accuse him of any offense - even treason - neglect to provide evidence to

support such a charge, but depend upon the oft-repeated lie to make slander stick - and all for the publicity which attends a few lines in a newspaper. Such men are democracies chief enemies - though they fancy themselves in principle defenders

The situation, at home and abroad, is such as can very easily bring about a feeling of real discouragement in the mind of the average American.

Is there nothing that can prevent that discouragement - can nothing dispel the fog of fear which, if it grips the heart of America, can bring with it the destruction of every sacred American institution?

Yes, there is something - and you have it! It is the faith of your fathers - the God-given confidence that right will prevail if the individual American has the courage to stand by the heritage which is his - the heartfelt belief that this land of ours is the cradle of democracy, wherein the individual enjoys unalienable rights with which he was endowed, not by man, but by the Creator of the Universe.

These are the things with which you must concern yourself as you move into the business, political and social life of your country - or as you take up your studies in institutions of higher learning.

No matter where you go from these hallowed halls - you will find it necessary to pray God for the strength and courage to cling fast to those guideposts of life which the good sisters here at Bayview have given you. They will be your lighthouses, as it were, to guide your course through the shoals and fogs with which your mind must cope.

To you a good deal has been given - in the fundamentals of a good Catholic education which you have received, here. Of you, much is expected as you apply that Catholic education to the everyday problems of life.

It seems to me that the years which are immediately ahead offer the greatest opportunity for demonstrating to the world the genuine worth of the democratic system. I would say to you that democracy can be made to live only by a convincing demonstration of its inherent right to do so. Without constant attention to the duty which is ours as Americans, that democracy can wither for lack of concern, or be trampled under foot for lack of vigilance.

How can democracy anywhere live unless we in the United States typify its virtues?

How can we convince the devil's advocate of the necessity for religious freedom when we condone anti-religious organizations. How can we answer our critics when we permit - rather insist - that instructors in our schools must explain Marxism and its development - but refuse to permit any mention of the existence of God?

How can we proclaim our faith in the American family as the base of our society, when we insist that one child must be carved out of the great body of school children - and denied any benefits his Government will provide merely because his parents insist he must attend a school where he will learn something of the God who gave him life?

How can we champion racial tolerance elsewhere, when in our own country the color of a man's skin determines his economic limitations?

Aristotle wrote - "If liberty and equality are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in government to the utmost".

By the very nature of its being - its birth and its development, democracy must be constantly changing - never becoming static - always trying the new - and putting aside the obsolete. We would not be good Americans if we were not constantly on our tip-toes looking into the future.

It rests entirely with you - and the hundreds of thousands of your

comrades in the class of 1950, to determine whether or not the American system of democracy will survive and develop - into a real community of interests, governed by and for its individuals.

There are many who fear to try because they fear to fail. Please, God, in you, the graduates of 1950, we may find the spark of courage and determination which will strive to bring right out of wrong. We pray you will, by your interest and participation in the public life of your country restore dignity and respect to the State's awards of authority.

Your loyalty to your Faith and your Country can make truth triumphant and bring to each of you tremendous pride in the part you have played in the development of a greater America - a finer and nobler world. You are assured of this end result if you will but preserve the tradition you have received here at St. Mary's.

I sincerely believe you have great possibilities. I am convinced you have tremendous responsibilities. I think your greatest worry should be not that you will fail to prosper and succeed in whatever is your chosen field but that you may fail to use the ability which is yours to meet the challenge which life presents to you. Not failure, but low aim, is the crime.

You must be conscious always that your reliance must be ultimately on the eternal - not the temporal; that your standards must be tied, not to fashion but to good taste; not to pride - but to self-respect; not to notoriety but to fame; - in short, never to the spurious but always to the genuine.