

Address delivered by Congressman John E. Fogarty to the graduating class of St. Francis Xavier's Academy, June 1, 1951, at the Academy Auditorium, Providence, Rhode Island.

No person today can consider easy an assignment to address a High School graduating class. The confusion which appears to surround our every activity makes the choice of a fitting topic a most difficult one.

My primary concern, after being invited to address you, was that I should say something which would be of some help to you. I was determined, in so far as I am able, to avoid anything which might add to the confusion.

After a great deal of pondering, I came to the conclusion that I could do nothing better than to talk with you about the thoughts which ran through my mind while I contemplated the tremendously important milestones which you young ladies have reached.

I thought about inspiration and guideposts. I thought about standards and norms. I thought about leadership - and the lack of it - and I wondered how you young people would go about the charting of your course through life.

From the point where I stand, viewing the panorama of life, it seems evident that young people throughout the world must be concerned over the type of leadership which is being provided for them.

Many times it appears that there are only extremes in the appeals which are made to the minds of men; extremes in ideologies and conceptions - political, economic and even military.

Brilliant men and women bespeak the great virtues of the omnipotent state, describing it as all good and all powerful; pleading that it alone is

the answer to the economic and political ills which beset mankind.

The voices of others, just as well-trained and brilliant, are raised in supplication, urging a return to the "good old days" when government had little or no concern with the private lives of its citizens.

Large holdings are condemned, on the one hand, and on the other, the amassing of great wealth through "rugged individualism" is defended.

Statesmen, Executives and Jurists denounce one another in their fervent insistence on one kind or another of legislation, regulation or interpretation. Even great generals war with each other over policies and tactics.

In such a welter of discord, whose advice can you take; whose inspiration should move you; to which type of policy or program will you lend your support?

If you are concerned because of the leadership which is offered to your generation; if you are not completely satisfied with that leadership and feel you must seek further - I would like to suggest that, at this stage of your career, you look no further than yourself.

Today you finish a task which makes it possible for you to make a beginning.

During your grammar and high school days you have been learning how to read. Now you must read.

You have been learning how to think. Now you must think.

During your days at St. Xavier's, the good sisters have placed in your hands, as it were, the tools with which you will be able to make use of the talents which God has given you. If you will use those tools wisely you can bring intelligent leadership to whatever walk of life your ambition may direct your efforts.

look about you. Everywhere there is opportunity.

Men and women learned in the Healing Arts labor over test tubes and formulae seeking to find cures for the manifold ailments which affect the human body. These strivings have been going on for centuries. Yet, despite the almost incredible strides which science has made in these fields, there are such things as cancer, the crippling afflictions of rheumatism and arthritis; and, perhaps the saddest of all - infantile paralysis and cerebral palsy. Here is a field which presents a fitting challenge to the promise which you have this graduation day.

Not that you should concentrate your energies toward the discovery of a new medicine of such great value that you might become a Croesus - but that the talents with which God has endowed you could be devoted to the betterment of the lot of all of his creatures.

In other fields of science, hour after tedious hour of research and study is being devoted to the exploration of all the secrets of the universe - on the one hand to make travel swifter, life more pleasant and property more secure. At the same time branches of these studies concentrate on the creation of death dealing and property destroying weapons which make thinking men shudder and fear for the future of the world.

What possibilities here? You with your sound basis for a Catholic education, appreciating the difference between right and wrong, between truth and error, if you will but devote yourselves seriously to the task, could bring intelligence and common sense into this critical area. It is not sufficient that man discover these secrets which have been hidden from him for so long - it is of the utmost importance that those discoveries be devoted to the betterment of mankind, rather than to his destruction.

In the economic arena contesting forces are constantly at work.

The heads of families strive mightily to earn enough to provide homes for their children with ample food and clothing and a few of the good things of life, which today, have become indispensable, often sacrificing much in order to give to their children a proper education.

Also - in economic life, while many business men and manufacturers are conscious of their social obligations, you will find ample evidence of greed and dishonesty. Many times you will be shocked by the demonstrations of man's inhumanity to man.

You young ladies are leaving high school in the year which marks the anniversaries of these two greatest of all encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno*. I recommend most sincerely that you study them carefully and then appreciate the tremendous need which exists for the better direction of all man's efforts, working man, business man and manufacturer alike.

In Public life great forces strive for mastery over man's mind.

Many times it seems that only the material things in life are of any importance. A nation must amass great wealth and mount tremendous power. Those who can contribute most to the development of that wealth and power seem to be the favored few. Often the condition of the poor and the humble is completely ignored in the mad rush, under the tortured slogan "First things first".

Various economic and political ideologies are set forth, each one couched in the language considered ideal for selling to the body politic. Cynical hypocrites talk of liberty and freedom and equal opportunity while their every day conduct indicates they have but one standard and that is identified by the dollar sign.

Adding to our daily confusion, we frequently have powerful advocates

rushing onto the scene, presenting their causes under the best possible dramatic circumstances. Never stopping to weigh the facts, many people, carried away by emotion, rush to the support or condemnation of such an advocate. Prominent figures become involved in bitter debate and the personalities of the adversaries come to dominate our thinking. The essential principles involved are lost sight of.

You graduates of St. Xavier's have been given the basis for a balance of intellect which should enable you to make calm decisions. You have been taught the virtue of Christian charity, the importance of truth, the value of reason.

In political life, if such should be your bent, you would possess the ability to remain calm when all about you became hysterical. I believe you would have the courage to demand all the facts, and having all the facts, you would place them over against the sound Catholic principles you have absorbed here and thus reach an intelligent decision.

Yes, there is ample opportunity. You need not be condemned to the monotonous routine of a daily life without inspiration, without a goal.

Find the field in which you believe your talents can best be put to use. Examine the leadership being provided in this field - and if it is not entirely to your satisfaction, resolve, with the help of God, to be its leader.

Remember always that in this life you can't get something for nothing. Your reward, both in the peace of mind that comes with a job well done and in the material things of life you amass, will depend entirely on the effort which you put forth.

Seek out the right always, and once having arrived at what you believe

to be the right, have the courage of your convictions and stand against all the world if need be, in your insistence that right must prevail.

Never permit yourself to enjoy the luxury of discouragement.

Recall, when you need courage, the fate that might have been St. Lavier's, had the good sisters been timid or afraid. Although appealed to, for the good of the community, to leave Providence, and thus bow to the bitter hatred which had brought the promise to burn their convent, those sisters, with faith in God and fortified by the knowledge they had a Divine mission to perform here, stood their ground. There was no fire and you young ladies add another band of jewels to the crowns of those sisters who made this day possible.

Let the fire of zeal which was theirs burn into your hearts, and let it be the inspiration for building an excellent life, devoted to God and Country. Never let that fire die.

Homer speaks of one "who dwelling in the distant fields, without a neighbor near him, hides a burning stick in the dark ashes, keeping carefully the seeds of fire alive, lest, on his return, to light his hearth, he must bring fire from afar."

Pray God you will never be compelled, because of wasted years and wasted efforts, to hack your way back to the side of right and truth, begging for a spark to light your way.

Tomorrow is yours. I hope your days will always be happy and that the good Lord will shower upon you all the blessings he can bestow. But above all else, I hope you leave here with the strength of character to face whatever the future brings, with courage and fortitude.

Happiness, prosperity, even fame can be yours - if you will it.

The declining years of your life can be filled to overflowing with peace and contentment, if you are able to look back on no wasted time - no wasted

talents.

I recall reading the poet's lines about Caesar who had tarried too long in Egypt. As his ship sailed toward Rome, Caesar was seen weeping as he looked back on the fading shore line.

The poet says -

"Twas not for loss of love he wept;

But for a tryst with greatness, never kept.

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