

## Leaving Footprints of Integrity, Excellence and Perseverance

I have fallen in love with the University of Pennsylvania. I have fallen in love with this school, primarily because of three wonderful compliments that one of the parents paid me as I was coming down the elevator and heading here for Irvine. She saw me with my robe covered by my bag and she smiled and said, "Congratulations, you're graduating." Well, I was flattered, she thought I was a student, I smiled and said, "Thank you, ma'am, but I'm not a student here," and blushing almost apologetically she said, "Oh, you are a member of the faculty." Once again a great compliment. "No ma'am," I said, "I'm not a member of the faculty," and now, she was puzzled. "You have a robe, you're not a student, you're not a member of the faculty." "Oh, ma'am, I am the baccalaureate speaker." "Desmond Tutu!" she said, "I am so delighted to meet you." Well, you know, we all look alike, but the point is, thank you for this opportunity to participate in this baccalaureate service.

I want to talk about living a life that matters. Two construction workers were taking a lunch break. One opened his lunch bag and exclaimed, "Not bologna sandwiches again! This is the third time this week I've had bologna sandwiches, I hate bologna sandwiches." His compatriot said, "Well Bob, why don't you ask your wife to fix you something different?" To which Bob responded, "I'm not married. I made these sandwiches myself."

Members of the Class of 2003, the truth of the matter is, most of the bologna we find in our lives we put there ourselves. One of the challenges of life is to ensure that we have a sufficiently ethical outlook that we do not sabotage our destiny. Recently a group of very senior citizens was surveyed. They were 95 and older, and asked the question, "If you had your life to live over again what would you do differently?" The responses were interesting because they help us to think about living a life that matters. They said, "We would take more risk." They said, "We would live a more contemplative life-style. We would think more about what is happening in our world." They said, "We would eat more ice cream and fewer beans." They said, "We would invest our lives in something that would live on after we're dead." The poet Longfellow penned the words, "lives of great men (and women I might add) all remind us, we can live our lives sublime, and departing leave behind us footprints on the sands of time."

I would like to suggest a few footprints that you need to leave. First, the footprint of integrity. The Jewish scriptures state in the first psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the lord and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by rivers of water that bringeth forth its fruit in its season and its leaves also shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." It is a description of a life of integrity. The etymology of the word, as you know, comes from the notion of "holdness." It means that there is not a chasm between our rhetoric and our actions, between the creed and the deed, between the ought and the is. And that is not an easy footprint to leave because the truth of the matter is there is a civil war going on inside of most of us. Plato described the human will as a charioteer with two headstrong horses each pulling in the opposite direction. One poet said "that the little bit of bad in the best of us and a little bit of good in the worst of us so it behooves the best of us not to talk about the rest of us." We've got challenges to face as we seek to leave the footprint of integrity. Let me suggest some lenses to use as you seek to live a life of ethical congruence. The golden rule is not a bad idea. You find it in Judaism, Islam and all of the major religions, Christianity: Treat others like you want to be treated. Utilitarianism offers some notions: Do the most good for the most people. One part of Kant's categorical imperative is instructive, "Live in such a way, that your action could be made universal law." And then your founder, Benjamin Franklin, has what I call the blush test. Franklin was in London and he received a telegram, "Ben, be careful, there are spies." He sent back a telegram, "Thanks for the advice but I'm not worried for I have made it a principal of my life never to do anything in private that would make me blush if it were made public." That's the blush test. Now some of us have a rather high blush threshold, and so I say, "Never say or do anything in private that you would not want printed in the headlines of your hometown newspaper." Leave the footprint of integrity.

There is a second footprint and that is the footprint of excellence. It is a footprint that may be rather challenging for you gifted men and women to leave. For most of you are five talent individuals and quite frankly, you can go through life on automatic pilot and still receive kudos and compliments. I challenge you to not be satisfied with cruising through life. I

challenge you to do your best. Compete with yourself. Ecclesiastes 9:10 says, "Whatsoever thy hands find to do, do it with all thy might for there is no work nor knowledge nor device nor wisdom in the grave wither thou goeth." Proverbs Chapter 22 verse 29 says, "Show me a man or woman who excels in his or her work, he or she will stand before kings and queens and not ordinary people." Strive to leave the footprint of excellence.

I love the story that Booker Washington tells in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*. He walked many miles to get to Hampton University where he desired to matriculate. He was dirty, he had not used any Right Guard, I guess it wasn't invented in those days, and the admissions officer seeing him was stunned at this sight standing before her. She knew he would certainly not be admitted without any money. He watched as she admitted others and finally to stall, as she would construct her, "you can't come here son" speech. She said, "the recitation room needs to be swept, would you do that? Then I will talk with you." Booker Washington said, "Well, I knew how to use a broom." He went into the recitation room and swept it not once but thrice and then taking a tattered handkerchief from his pocket, he dusts the room four times. He came out and said, "Ma'am, I've finished the job." She said, "Oh, you have," and taking a white handkerchief from her drawer, (it was obvious that she had done this before) she promenaded into the room and the walls, the chair, the desk, and looking she saw nothing, sheepishly, she said to this young man who was committed to excellence, "Well, I guess we'll just have to find a place for you at this school, won't we?" Leave the footprint of excellence.

Martin King was fond of saying, "Whatever job you do, do it so well, that the living, the dead, or the unborn, couldn't do it better." He liked to say, "If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, go out and sweep streets like Michelangelo carved marble, sweep streets like Raphael painted pictures, sweep streets like Beethoven composed music, and like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say here lived a great street sweeper who swept his or her job well." Leave the footprint of excellence.

Finally, leave the footprint of perseverance. Hang in there. With your Ivy League diploma, it will still not always be easy, and you must learn to persevere. Matthew 24:13 says, "But those who endure to the end will be saved." Perseverance is an attribute that is often underestimated, a difference between success and failure is often couched in that word perseverance.

One of my favorite stories is taken from the Jewish scriptures in Genesis chapter 29; it's the story of Rachel and Leah, Jacob and Laban. Jacob, you remember the twin of Esau, was running from the homicidal intentions of his brother because he had stolen the birthright. He got to the country of Uncle Laban and there he met Rachel who was comely. The Hebrew says, beautiful of face and form, dangerous. Rachel was so beautiful, that Jacob started crying when he met her.

Now that's a pretty woman. I have met many attractive women in my life but I have never met a woman where they said, "Admiral Black this is Mrs. Smith," and I said, "Mrs. Smith" (*in crying voice*). Rachel was beautiful. Now Rachel had a sister, Leah. The Bible says Leah was tender eyed. The Hebrew is kind of confusing; either she had an eye disease or she was cross-eyed, a Sheneneh type regardless of how you would put. So Jacob was totally infatuated with Rachel. Laban saw the fires of passion in the eyes of Jacob and said, "son, how long are you willing to work for my daughter's hand in marriage?" Jacob quickly said, "I would work seven years for a girl like that." Laban said, "it's a deal." One of the most incredible verses in all of literature, Genesis 29:20 and Jacob worked seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her. In fact, when I get to heaven, one of the first people I want to meet is Rachel. The day of the wedding arrived. The rabbi was up front, "Dearly beloved, we're gathered together in the site of God and in the presence of these witnesses to join this man and woman in the bonds of holy matrimony which is an honorable state instituted by God," Jacob said, "man it's been seven years, cut to the chase." They did the I dos. Now in that day the bride was covered with a thick veil. The veil was not removed



Barry Black

Photograph by Stuart Watson

until the marriage was consummated. I don't know what they were drinking at the wedding party but Jacob did not discover until the morning after he had not married the prepossessing Rachel but her cross-eyed older sister. And now Jacob is homicidal. "Where is Laban," he said? Laban does a verbal tap dance. "Now Jacob, I don't know how they do it where you come from, but in our country the older girl must marry first," but, says the wiley Laban, "if you will agree to work another seven years, you can have Rachel's hand as well." Now, I would have killed him on the spot, but Jacob a little more noble, leaving the footprint of integrity of course, incredible passage, Jacob worked yet another seven years.

The challenge in life is what will you do with your Leah. Those unwanted circumstances that stricture you and hem you in. What will you do with your Leah, those setbacks, those unexpected failures? Jacob discovered that Leah was not such a bad bargain after all. It was Leah, not Rachel, whom he buried at the family sepulcher at Machpelah. It was Leah, not Rachel, who gave him Rubin, Levi, and Judah. Out of whom came Moses, David, and Jesus Christ.

Members of the Class of 2003, leave your footprints on the sands of time. Live a life that matters. A life that makes a difference. Leave that footprint of integrity, leave that footprint of excellence, and when the

storms of life rage, so persevere so that you can cry out with the poet;  
I want to let go but I won't let go,  
There are battles to fight,  
By day and by night,  
for God and the right and I'll never let go.  
I want to let go but I won't let go,  
I'm sick 'tis true and weary and blue and  
Worn through and through  
But I'll never let go.  
I want to let go but I won't let go,  
No I will not yield,  
What, lie down on the field,  
And surrender my shield?  
NO! I'LL NEVER let go.  
I want to let go but I won't let go,  
May this be your song  
Mist legions of wrong,  
O, God, keep you strong,  
So that you will never ever let go.

Peace.

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*Baccalaureate Address by President Judith Rodin, May 18, 2003*

## Pursuing Common Goals

Welcome to all families, friends, faculty and honored guests. Graduates of the Class of 2003, tomorrow, you extraordinary young men and women will take the field named for our founder Benjamin Franklin to claim the prize and honor you have worked so hard to earn: a degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

In years past, I have saluted each graduating class for clearing academic hurdles that only get higher. And you deserve that praise. I have noted contributions to Penn's intellectual vitality and social fabric. And you deserve that praise. And I have marveled at the myriad ways our graduates began making a real difference in the world during their years at Penn. And you deserve that praise as well.

But today I would like to reflect on another quality that permeates the Class of 2003. It is a characteristic that you will need to succeed in all climates, be they economic, political, or cultural. It is a virtue that the world will need to survive and perhaps, someday, flourish. And that is *courage*.

I am not talking about the kind of daredevil bravado or recklessness that is fuelled by the destructive hate and vengeance of Ahab. The courage I have in mind and the courage I believe you possess in abundance is the measured, reflective, mature courage of Starbuck's—not the coffee, which is ubiquitous here, but Captain Ahab's wise and sensitive first mate in Herman Melville's great American novel *Moby Dick*. Melville introduces Starbuck as a "Quaker by descent" and a man possessed of "inner health and strength." Starbuck serves notice that, "*I will have no man in my boat who is not afraid of a whale.*" The narrator interprets that declaration "to mean, not only that the most reliable and useful courage is that which arises from the fair estimation of the encountered peril, but that an utterly *fearless* man is a far more dangerous comrade than a coward."

Now, there is no question that the world today contains far more danger and uncertainty than it seemed to have when you began at Penn four years ago. Today, borders and buffers have dissolved. Like the great white whale, a world that is vast and beautiful, but also dangerous and inscrutable looms large before us. Out of fear, some will duck under the covers. Like Ahab, others will lash out in hatred against what is unknowable.

However, for you, neither retreat nor blind fury is an option. We have taught you to engage the world with courage born of the skills, compassion, and habits of critical thinking that you acquired here and that you will need to confront crisis, challenge, and reversal. We have also taught you to be ready to cross many borders.

Author Salman Rushdie writes, "To cross a frontier is to be transformed. Alice at the gates of Wonderland, the key to that miniature world in her grasp, cannot pass through the tiny door beyond which she can glimpse marvelous things until she has altered herself to fit into her new world."

At the same time, Rushdie suggests that the "successful frontierswoman

is also in the business of surpassing. She changes the rules of her newfound land."

Graduates, your education at Penn has been the alteration process that's prepared you for *many* border crossings. You have learned the meaning of collaboration in the service of humanity at a very complex moment in history. You learned to live skillfully at Penn by forming alliances with your colleagues and making common cause with each other, harnessing and harmonizing your different skills and beliefs to pursue *common* goals.

Time and again, you pulled together, even when the grind of coursework and force of events could have driven you apart. And you have done many things that reveal your courage.

We've had an Engineering student go to Africa to create a multimedia documentary that explores the AIDS epidemic through the eyes of five heroic health workers.

We've had Wharton students launching a Social Impact Management Initiative in West Philadelphia to improve the quality of life for our neighbors.

We've had a team of College students launch an Empowerment Initiative that strengthens communications skills among high school students with high potential but few resources.

We've had two Nursing students prepare to become Navy pilots. And these are just a few examples.

All of you have been incredible during your time here. Now you must have the courage to continue to engage others with a compassionate heart.

Philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote, "The human heart in modern civilization ... is more prone to hatred than to friendship. And it is prone to hatred because it is dissatisfied, because it feels deeply, perhaps even unconsciously, that it has somehow missed the meaning of life. To find the right road out of this despair civilized man must enlarge his heart as he has enlarged his mind. He must learn to transcend *self*, and in so doing to acquire the freedom of the Universe."

If Bertrand Russell were writing today, he might have diagnosed fear and suspicion as sources of *modern* despair. We are seeing how fear and suspicion can diminish our capacity to enjoy the freedom that is the birthright of all people. Yet, Russell's prescription remains timely. Enlarging our hearts *is* liberating. It leads to respect for humanity and reverence for the source of all blessings bestowed upon us.

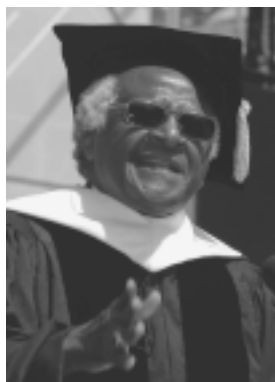
The great theologian Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that the true person of faith is one who "holds God and man in one thought in one time, at all times, who suffers in *himself* harms done to others, whose greatest passion is compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair."

Graduates, my prayer for you is that you are always imbued with the love and reverence that we share today in this place. And may you gain the freedom and strength to bring to the world the gifts of your knowledge and learning. Godspeed to all of you.

*Commencement Address by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, May 19, 2003*

## We All Are Family

Madame President, Chairperson of the Trustees, Class of 2003, all of you dear friends, good morning.



*Desmond Tutu*

Heartiest congratulations to all of you graduating today. But I'm sure you want to extend a very, very warm thank you and congratulations to those who supported you: your families, your spouses—where it applies, your children, and even your teachers. Thank you, this splendid University, for this honorary degree that I have received. A few years ago my wife and I were visiting West Point Military Academy and at the end of the visit, the cadets thought they should give me a cap to commemorate the visit. When I tried it on it didn't fit. A nice wife would have said well, the cap is too small. My wife said, his head is too big. And today I have a very substantial reason for being slightly more swollen-headed through this wonderful degree from this prestigious institution. I don't know whether you remember the story of the farmer who was surveying his field. The corn was swaying beautifully in the breeze. A traveler came by and stood next to the farmer and said, "What a splendid job you and God have made." The farmer puffed away a little bit on his pipe and then he said, "You should have seen what it looked like when God had it all to himself."

One of the paradoxes is that we have a God, the omnipotent, all-powerful, one who was able to create all there is without our assistance. The paradox is that this omnipotent God now wants to wait for human partners, collaborators, fellow workers such as you and I, and God is prepared to put a risk whatever project God has in mind. And we see how frequently God spent a long time trying to persuade somewhat reluctant human partners. "Knock, knock." "Who's there?" "Gabriel." "Gabriel who?" "Gabriel the Archangel. Hi, Mary." "Hi." "Mary, God would like you to be the mother of his son." Mary said, "What? Do you know in this village you can't scratch yourself without everybody knowing about it, and you want me to be what? An unmarried mother! Sorry, I'm a decent girl, try next door." We would have been in a real pickle except that Mary of course said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord."

And so this God waits on all of us to try to turn all kinds of aridities into glorious, gorgeous blossoming gardens. When there is poverty and

hunger, God wants to perform God's miracle of ending that poverty, that hunger. But it won't be by God sending down hamburgers to feed a hungry person. It is as you and I, and you, and you, and you, are willing to be God's partners providing God with the wherewithal so that God can perform God's miracle. And God looks on the aridities, the wildernesses of injustices of oppression and God wants to end injustices and oppression but usually it isn't by God sending a lightning bolt to strike down the perpetrators of evil. It is as a Nelson Mandela, and others such as Mamphela Ramphele, who are willing to be God's fellow workers that you end a vicious system such as is apartheid. And you in this country helped us to become free, you helped us to become democratic you helped us to become a country that is seeking to be non-racial and non-sexist. You didn't bomb us into liberation. We became free nonviolently. And the country demonstrated that there are other ways of dealing with difference, with disagreement, with conflict. The way of forgiveness, the way of compromise, the way of reconciliation. And we learned in South Africa that there is no way in which you are going to have true security that comes from the barrel of a gun.

But true security happens when there is justice. And so we weep as we see what happens in Northern Ireland. Our hearts bleed as we see what happens in the Middle East. And we say, it is possible, if it could happen in South Africa, it is possible for there to be peace, for there to be justice, for there to be equity in Northern Ireland, in the Middle East. We say it will come when Israel is recognized as a sovereign state with sovereign boundaries that are recognized and respected by all. But it will come as well only when there is a viable Palestinian state, sovereign, recognized, and accepted. But it is possible for enemies to become friends.

And God calls on you. God says I have a dream. I have a dream, that my children will recognize that they are members of one family, that they are sisters and brothers. When we recognize that we are family, then we know that the ethic of family applies. In the family we say, from each according to the ability, to each according to their need. And so you and I will be those who protest when nations spend obscene amounts on budgets of death and destruction. When we know that a small fraction of this will enable our sisters and brothers everywhere to have enough clean water to drink, enough food to eat, will have enough proper education and healthcare that is affordable. God says, I have a dream, that all of you my children will realize that you belong in one family. This is a family in which there are no outsiders, all are insiders, all. You see when Jesus spoke about his death he said if I be lifted up I will draw, he didn't say I will draw some, he said I will draw all, black, white, rich, poor, American, Iraqi, Afghanistan, we all. Gay, lesbian, straight, all belong in this family; Arafat, Sharon, George Bush, Ben Laden. And God says, I have no one except you to help me realize my dream. "Will you help me?" says God. "I have no one except you." Thank you.

*Commencement Remarks by Lance Donaldson-Evans, Chair of the Faculty Senate, May 19, 2003*

## Humility, Docility and Responsibility

I bring to you the greetings and congratulations of the faculty on this momentous day in your academic life. You have successfully run the marathon, and now you are seated together in, appropriately, Franklin Field under the proud gaze of family, friends and faculty to receive the honors due to you.

I certainly don't want to diminish your justified euphoria, but professors are like parents: we can't resist an opportunity to pass on advice, which we see as wisdom (my own children call it "nagging"). As both a professor and a parent of one of today's graduates, I am going to yield to pressure from my peers to do the same.

I will of necessity be brief (the Faculty Senate Chair is allotted 180 seconds—now there is real wisdom!). I want to remind you of three virtues, which I hope you already practice, since they are essential to your continued success in life *après-Penn*.

The first is humility, a quality in short supply in today's world because it is wrongly assumed that a humble person is weak and spineless. True humility is, in reality, a strength and involves acknowledging both our abilities and our limitations. You have already achieved much, but don't let people say of you what some cynics say about teenagers: "Hire a teenager now while he or she knows everything." Humility is the recognition that you don't know it all. Remember what the French writer Michel de Montaigne said, after a lifetime of learning: "Que sais-je?" (What do I know?).

The second quality I want to stress is docility, also usually given a negative spin, although it literally means: "easy to teach". You've all

demonstrated docility (although with some of you, we faculty sometimes had our doubts!) but docility should be a life-long attitude and cannot end when you leave Penn. Remember that today marks, not the end of your education, but merely the end of the beginning.

The final word *du jour* is responsibility. "Of those to whom much is given, much will be required." You have received one of the finest educations available today. But this privilege involves responsibility, responsibility to those less fortunate than you, responsibility to your community, to your country, to the world. You all know Penn's motto: "Leges sine moribus vanae" (Laws or learning without morals are empty or vain). Did you know that, until 1900, our motto was simply: "Sine moribus vanae"?<sup>1</sup> Then someone realized that it was ambiguous and could also be translated: "Loose women without morals," not quite what Benjamin Franklin had in mind when he founded Penn! In this era of often frightening challenges, but also of extraordinary opportunities, we desperately need what Penn is producing: women and men "cum moribus," with a sense of moral responsibility, striving to make the world a better, more peaceful place.

You are these women and men. If you practice humility, docility and responsibility, you can make a difference. Indeed as graduates of the University of Pennsylvania, you must make a difference. Congratulations, and Godspeed.

<sup>1</sup> See Samuel Hughes, "Whiskey, Loose Women, and Fig Leaves", *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan/Feb 2002.



# COMMENCEMENT 2003

*The plaidly-clad bagpipers played as the smiling students, their proud parents, and the Old Guard greeted one another during Penn's traditional procession along Locust Walk on the way to Franklin Field for the 247th Commencement where the Class of 2003 became grinning graduates as the sun shined. President Judith Rodin conferred honorary degrees upon the six recipients and the graduates from the 12 schools.*

Photographs by Lisa Godfrey



*Before assembling on the reviewing stand to watch the procession along Locust Walk, President Judith Rodin joined Ben on the Bench. The Honorary Degree Recipients and Trustee Chairman James Riepe, gathered behind them: standing (left to right): Dr. Herbert Gans, Commencement speaker Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, Philip Roth, James Riepe, Dr. Sadako Ogata, and the Hon. Stephen Breyer.*

*For the streaming video of Penn's 247th Commencement ceremony—from the processional to recessional and all the pomp and circumstance, see [www.upenn.edu/commencement/webcast.html](http://www.upenn.edu/commencement/webcast.html)*