

Teach Love, No Matter Your Vocation

ADDRESS TO GRADUATES
PONTIFICAL JOHN PAUL II INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY
SUPREME KNIGHT PATRICK E. KELLY
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On behalf of the Institute, let me begin with a word of gratitude to His Eminence, Cardinal O'Malley, for celebrating Mass and for being with us on this important day. I am also grateful to Msgr. Bart Smith, for graciously hosting us today at St. Bernadette's. Msgr. Smith and I go back a long way — we have been friends and collaborators since 1985.

I also want to thank Father Lopez, distinguished faculty, parents, family and friends for being here. And, of course, most of all, thank you and congratulations to our graduates. You have persevered through a uniquely challenging time, and you should be proud.

This is my first time addressing the graduates of the Institute as the Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus. This would be an honor under any circumstance, but it is especially meaningful for me, personally, as an alumnus of the Institute. Twenty years ago, I was sitting in a pew of the Crypt Church at the Basilica listening to Carl Anderson address Institute graduates for his first time as Supreme Knight. So, if you think you know what you'll be doing 20 years from now, or where your Institute diploma might bring you — I have news for you!

Truly, I could not be more grateful for the time I spent at the Institute and for the outstanding formation I received from the faculty. I say without hesitation that my experience at the Institute changed everything for me. It was the definitive turning point in my life.

Much has changed in the world since my graduation day. We now live in the era of the 2015 *Obergefell* decision and national proposals such as the Equality Act. We need not dwell upon the

serious, even grave, challenges that face us. Nor do we need to search for the reasons we face them. You know the reasons very well, because of your education and the formation you have received in an authentic anthropology and the natural law.

For those who have eyes to see, it is readily apparent that, by narrowing its viewpoint and by excluding the reality of the transcendent, much of our culture has locked itself into a kind of intellectual prison — a prison based upon subjective judgments of reality, a narrow understanding of reason, and the reduction of knowledge to the empirical and technological. And the walls continue to close in.

St. John Paul II lived under two of the most extreme totalitarian regimes in modern history. He sought and found freedom by pursuing the truth of the human person. He was thereby able to transcend the narrow constraints of fascist and Marxist ideologies. He opened the minds of the young through the expression of the truths found in philosophy, theology, nature and the arts. He imposed nothing, but instead proposed “a more excellent way” (*1 Cor 12:31*).

True freedom starts with seeing reality in its fullness, particularly the truth of the human person. That's one of the beauties of the discipline you have studied. You now have the right — and indeed the duty — to proclaim as real the most fundamental things that were once a given everywhere and to everyone.

What you will offer to the world with the knowledge gained through your studies is not just a series of theological arguments, but the deep truths of the human person, created male and

female and called to participate in the love that Jesus Christ brings. We are called to flourish in serving Him and, with Him, to stand for the true good of every human being. These are the truths tied so clearly and immediately to human happiness and flourishing. These are the truths which have the power to break down the ever-encroaching walls, and to open minds and imaginations to a more expansive and life-giving horizon.

Emmanuel Mounier, the leader of the French personalist movement, said, “One does not free man by detaching him from the bonds that paralyze him; one frees man by attaching him to his destiny.”

My friends, if we believe that the truth is our destiny, and that the truth will set us free, then we should not hesitate to offer the truth through our very lives and in our daily circumstances.

And the Truth which we offer has another name. His name is Jesus Christ, who is love. It is love who saved us, and it is love who continually sets us free. Therefore, above all else, you must teach love. Not only by word, but by your actions and in the context of every relationship.

Teach love, no matter your vocation — whether you move on to continued studies, to parish ministry, to diocesan work, academia, or to the school of the family.

You will undoubtedly face resentment, opposition and rejection. But armed with the conviction that what you are proposing is not simply a set of academic facts, but a plan for human flourishing, offered out of love for the person before you, your service will spring from an eternal source.

And when you find yourself in those moments of rejection and desolation, know that gazing upon the cross of Christ will console you and help you to realize that you are not alone — that He loved you first.

In this year of St. Joseph, I have been reflecting often upon the silent but faithful witness of the foster father of Jesus. So, I’ll end with this.

In announcing this year of St. Joseph, Pope Francis spoke eloquently of Joseph’s “creative courage.” He noted how St. Joseph consistently faced unexpected challenges: the fact of Mary’s pregnancy, the lack of a secure place for her to give birth, the threat of Herod slaughtering first-born male children, the prophecy that Mary was to be pierced with a sword. In each of these situations, St. Joseph was obedient, entrusting himself completely to the will of God and summoning courage in the face of an unknown future.

Each of us here — myself included — will continue to face our own unique and unexpected set of challenges amidst an unknown future.

We must pray for the grace of the creative courage necessary to meet those challenges. And we must do so in confidence that, like St. Joseph, our service is to the Word made flesh, to the Truth who is a person, Christ Jesus.

Again, my deepest congratulations to you, my fellow graduates.

May God bless each one of you, your families and all those whom you will serve.

Thank you.