Graduation Address
Trinity - Roselle, Illinois

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IN NOMINE JESU

Proverbs 23: 26 My Son, give Me thine heart and let thine eyes observe My ways.

GIVE ME YOUR HEART !

You all feel that this is no ordinary day - but one that has special significance and joy, because this is the day when you have reached a milestone in your education and are graduating. You, my dear graduates, have been especially fortunate and blessed, because you have had the privilege of being taught in a Christian school by Christian teachers. It has only been through great sacrifice and cost to your parents and this congregation that you have been afforded this opportunity. During the past weeks and months and years you have learned much to equip you for life - to help make our world a better place in which to live. But more important than that, you have been educated for eternity. You know what the Word of God is and what it says. Be on your guard that no one twists it or turns it or tells you that it does not mean what it plainly says - that it does not mean that we should fear, love, and trust in God above all things - that it does not mea that we should love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; and our neighbor as ourselves. God is very earnest about this. He wants you to know that He will never take second place in your life. He wants you to kno that He will not accept mere head-knowledge - an accumulation of the facts of Scripture - as a substitute for the Christian faith and the Christian life. Therefore, the great God who made our world and all that is therein comes to you on this day of your graduation and says, My son, give Me thine heart and let thine eyes observe My ways.

When someone calls to one of you boys and girls and says, Hey, kid, it is quite different from the voice of your father saying, My son, my daughter. God might address you as My creature, but He doesn't. The warmth of His love comes out in His call to you, My Son, My daughter. Your father and mother play a very special role in your life. They take care of you and watch out for you. They take a special interest in you even though it may seem to you once in a while that they are just trying to hem you in. They will always be interested in you as long as you live and as long as they live. Why? - Just because you are their son or daughte

The great God speaks to you as a Father: My son, My daughter, give Me your heart! It may surprise you that God asks you to give Him anything. Most of the time you are doing the asking. Father and mother put food on the table, and you just take it for granted that it will be there. They provide you with clothing and try to keep you looking nice. They tell you to tuck in your shirt when you would rather keep it out, to shine your shoes when you would rather be doing something else. You are always on the receiving end, whether it is cookies, or money for an allowance, or advice that is being passed out.... Your heavenly Father is a Giver, too. He gives you everything you have, including your parents. He has given you your body and soul and all your senses - those five marbles which your parents and teachers hope you will learn to roll in the right direction. He sends His holy angels to protect you when you are least looking for protection. Above all, He gives you eternal life in His Son, Jesus Christ, and He gives you instruction on how you can walk along His way. All of this God gives.

Now He asks you to give. This is the big surprise - that God should ask you to give Him anything. He just crooks His finger to the planets, and they have to come along. They have no choice as to what orbit they will follow. But you are different. You are His son, His daughter. You don't have to obey Him if you don't want to. But to show you how much you mean to Him, He says to you, My son, My daughter, give Me your heart. Of course, God is not talking about that throbbing muscle in your chest which keeps you alive. Nor is He talking about those hearts we see so much of around Valentine's Day, a sort of sentimental thing which the boys go along with because the girls like it. When God says, Give Me your heart, He means He wants everything - everything about you, your body and soul, your mind and spirit. He won't take it by force. He wants you to give it. It is not enough for you to say, I believe in God. It is not even enough to say, I love God. Your heart has to be in it. You have to mean it with all your heart.

How many of us are really ready to give your lives into the service of God? You know how it is with you. You are not always ready. You want to do things your

own way. You are not always happy about doing things God's way. If sons and daughters don't care for their fathers and mothers, if they don't respect, honor, and obey their parents, they are hardly more than offspring. I know some fathers and mothers who get more joy out of raising their dog than out of raising a son or daughter who refuses to be a real child. A journalist of international reputation has put it this way: Look at man historically and weep. Look at man scientifically sociologically, and psychologically and tremble. One of the great historians of the world has made a similar observation: One thing that a historian cannot avoid learning is the validity of the Scriptural doctrine of original sin. Put in ordinary language, this means simply that people are not ready to go God's way. They are born with the disposition to go their own way. Whoever goes his own way is not a true son or daughter of the Living God.

That is why God gave us Christ. That is why God sent His only Son into the world to give His life for us. Only in Christ does anyone receive the power to become a real and loyal son or daughter of God, as it is written: To as many as believe on His Name, He give the power to become children of God. Only by faith in Christ can you give your heart to God and become a true child of God - with all that that word implies - ready to love Him, honor and obey Him. All that you have learned here points to the fact that without God there is no law and order, there is no love, no peace, no guidance in the world. We had neither the wisdom nor the power to fulfill His commandments; and so He gave us Christ in order that all the Commandments might be fulfilled for us by Him. Never forget that whether we have broken one or all of them, we could not help ourselves unless we recognized the grace of God in Christ, our Lord. God has been our help and everlasting joy. He has brought order into our lives and peace into our souls. He has given purpose and direction and meaning for living. He is OUR FATHER. Let us say it to ourselves again: WITHOUT GOD we are a fish out of water; we are a bird without wings; we are a drop of water blown into a blast furnace; we are a blade of grass stuck into the sand; we are a plane that has lost its motor, and a rocket that has lost it power!

God is the life in you - In Him we live and move and have our being - Christ died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

Have no illusions or delusions about this matter. Man, with all of his education, with all of his rockets and space ships, is not going to be able to storm the gates of Paradise in his own right and claim for himself a blessed eternity. There is no other way to heaven - none that even the wisest man on earth can claim to know - except the way which Jesus pointed out when He said clearly: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. Did you hear that - NO MAN - NOBODY? Could He make it any plainer? There is no other way. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost - In this was manifested the love of God for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly - There is none other Name, under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved.

Do you want to know how anxious God is to have you as His child, back home where you belong? Look at the picture which Jesus gives us of the father waiting for his lost son to come home. Look at the way the father runs to meet him and embrace him and to tell him that he missed him - that he is happy to have him home again. Then look at the Son of God hanging on the Cross, laying down His life that you might be His own forever. Listen to Jesus say: Father, forgive them - Come unto Me....and I will give you rest - Behold, I make all things new. This is the great call from the Father-heart of God in Christ Jesus: My son, give Me your heart and let your eyes observe My ways.

God is your Father! You BELONG TO HIM. - More than you belong to your parents, more than you belong to your community or your nation, more than you belong to your teachers - YOU BELONG TO GOD! Only the devil himself would dare to say that this is not true. Only the devil would dare to attack the doctrine of God and grace and love in Jesus Christ. Only he will try to deprive you of the blessings of worship, the assurance of sins forgiven, the peace of Holy Communion, and the glory

of Christ waiting for you in heaven at the end of your days. Be careful now! Any voice or any man who comes to you and tries to take the assurance of God, as your Father, out of your heart, or the peace of Christ, your Redeemer, out of your soul, or the blessed guidance of the Holy Spirit to bring holiness into your life, away from you - that man is a devil and all his words are designed to destroy you and confuse you.

Heaven is your home! YOU BELONG TO GOD! He is your Father. God, who has been our help in ages past, will wait throughout the years that lie ahead to bring you finally and safely Home to Him. On the way ahead He will offer you all the same things that He gave you in the years past. There will be love and human affection, there will be learning and laughter, there will be work and worry - but always there will be God, your Father - God to guide you - God to help you - God to love you - God to protect you - God to bless you. If you don't have a friend in the world, God will still be your Friend. If your faither and mother should forget you a thing which could never happen, God will never forget you. He loves you to the end; and this is what He says: My son, My daughter, give Me your heart and let your eyes observe Me ways.

Does your graduation make you happy? Do you feel that it is a thrill to have your loved ones around you to congratulate you and wish you God's blessing? Then remember God wants you finally to be with Him in heaven with all your loved ones around you - with no one missing and everyone happy. That can be done only when you know you BELONG TO GOD, GIVE HIM YOUR HEART, and want nothing more than to be His forever. God and you - with one heartbeat - forever - what an unbeatable combination. Amen.