

Remarks at International School of the Sacred Heart
Commencement Exercises
Tokyo, Japan
6 June 1984

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I am most honoured and happy to have been asked to make these remarks tonight. Like all the parents here I come to this occasion with rather great feelings of parental pride - and I am not the only United Nations University father here to watch his daughter graduate tonight. I hope you will forgive me if my remarks come more from a proud father's heart than they do from any wisdom of the United Nations or its university. In any event, my very warmest congratulations to you on a job well done - and that includes your dedicated teachers who have done so much to make this moment happen.

I am fairly sure that you are now feeling that peculiarly bittersweet mixture of happiness, excitement, apprehension and sorrow that Commencements somehow always seem to brew. Happiness at having successfully arrived at this point in your lives after many long hours of hard study. Excitement and apprehension over where you are going next and how you will adjust to a new set of unknowns. And sorrow, of course, at the

thought of leaving the many very good friends you have made here at Sacred Heart.

Let me try and temper your sadness a bit, in emphasizing how important it is to realize that parting from friends and associates is very much a condition of modern life. The world and its peoples are constantly on the move and change is very much more a characteristic of our age than is permanency.

In this connection, let me venture to say that you are likely to discover two things as your life goes on:

- The first will be how precious are the friendships you make, especially those made early in life. As one grows older, you come to realize just how important friends are - even when at a far remove, friendships can provide comfort and happiness and enrich and widen your own life experience through theirs.

- The second thing, judging from my own experience in this fast moving, rapidly changing world, is that human relationships require time. Time given is the water that nourishes friendship and love.

So I would counsel you to be patient and not be over anxious - the friendships you have made here will stand you in good stead over the years and new friends will emerge to further enrich your lives.

You now move out into a world from which you have thusfar been insulated in many ways. The very fact of your schooling being inside and yet isolated from the cultural mainstreams of

Japan has contributed to that insulation, while at the same time it has laid important groundwork for your becoming a multicultural person.

The world you are entering is one that has become interdependent to an unprecedented degree - a rapidly changing and often bewildering world in which complexity will confront you at every turn.

In attempting to adapt and live in such a world, I would think you might have the best chances of adjusting to it by not planning your future too early and certainly not along too rigid and inflexible lines - for life is so much richer than we can envisage. The English mystery writer Margery Allingham perhaps put it best when she had one of her characters observe: "Life is what happens when you are planning something else."

Life is full of surprises, both pleasant and unpleasant. And the best we can do in the kind of unpredictable unfolding of human events that we call history of "The Future" is to develop within ourselves the capacity to remain open to continuous creative adjustment and responsiveness to new and often unexpected challenges. Yes, even to improvise, as long as we remain true to ourselves, to our deepest values and aspirations and commitment, and sense of basic purpose of one's life.

What do I mean when I speak about openness? My father used to say to me: When you wake up and hear the birds

singing, you know that your mind and your heart are open, free from preoccupation, and therefore capable of listening to others and ready to respond creatively to any problem that comes up during the day.

Therefore, listen to yourself. To this day, I still check myself whether I hear the birds singing.

There is a great deal about the modern world that is tragic and fearful and forboding - with much human suffering, a great deal of strife and danger, and, to you young people particularly, the threat that a nuclear holocaust would prevent you from living out your normal life spans.

At the same time, the world is full of promise. In principle, hunger, poverty, inequity and injustice no longer need to exist. There is the scientific knowledge available to deal with these problems and eradicate them.

But whether we will in fact be able to deal with them or whether the world will slide off into a sickening spiral of despair, strife and destruction will depend on your generation and the actions you take - for I am talking about your world and your future, not mine. You will be the ones making the decisions.

Given the extreme complexity of today's world, which can only increase, you will need to undergird those decisions with a great deal of expert knowledge, sophistication and human and historical understanding if you wish to make a difference.

Don't expect to be able to do so by concentrating on a single issue - for, in truth, there really are no single issues anymore. All problems are caught up in the intricately woven web of interdependence. The choices we have to make in life are no longer black and white, but choices between many shades of grey.

The success of your being able to cope with the future world will depend very much on the degree to which human beings can learn to understand each other in all their cultural differences - to develop, if you will, the cultural "street savvy" to live and work with each other. Here you should recognize the importance of preserving within you the precious sensitivity to others that your Sacred Heart experience has helped to breed in you. You are already well along the way to recognizing what many of my generation still stubbornly refuse to concede - that no country can any longer think of being an island unto itself. We must all be involved together in running the daily affairs of this limited planet.

One very important challenge before us lies in enhancing our capacity to listen to one another. If we don't want to destroy each - with the terrifying instruments of annihilation we now possess - then we must learn to build greater understanding and greater capacity for empathy and compassion. We must enlarge this capacity if we are to work together in a spirit of human solidarity and share in the sacrifices that

will be needed to right injustice and suffering across the globe.

But the most important lesson of all, as you look ahead to a frequently bewildering and often frightening future, is to know that you are less powerless than you think. The moment you give up, the moment you stop fighting the struggle - the case is lost. You will need to reach inside yourself for what George Kennan recently described as "a certain defiant faith - a desperate, unreasoning faith, if you will - but faith nevertheless in the endurance of this threatened world."

So no one should pretend that life will be easy in the years that lie ahead. The fears will not go away - you will need to learn to manage your fears and not strike out blindly at perceived shadows of threat and hostility.

But life, at the same time, can be a joy - in the appreciation of friendship, of love, of beauty and of laughter. The spirit of tolerance, compassion and loyalty can all be part of life's joy. And all the more joyful, I firmly believe, when one is able to draw strengths from inner spiritual resources. The world indeed is fragile, and insecure and threatened - but it can also be beautiful if you look at it from the fullness of your heart. All my best wishes as you start a new and exciting chapter of your lives.

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