

St. John Vianney lived in a village in the country side. One day as he was walking through the village he met a baker. The baker was a pleasant enough man but simple and ordinary. St. John had a pleasant talk with the man and soon continued on his way, but as he was leaving God spoke to him in his heart. God said: “John, I want you to know, you are a good and holy servant of mine, but that man you spoke with is greater than you.”

This is the same lesson Jesus teaches us in the Gospels. Christ said: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; ²⁸ even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:26-28)

Fellow Graduates,

We are called to a mission of service. For the past three years we have been developing our skills and talents to prepare ourselves for professions in media, theology, and business. Now the time has come for us to take our newly developed skills and apply them to our chosen careers, as we continue to live out our vocations. Though we have studied different things, and are continuing on into a variety of fields, we are united in this mission—to impact culture for Christ.

To accomplish this mission, we must bring our culture three things, three things our culture is starving for: beauty, truth, and goodness. Fellow media graduates, in a world of world full of suffering, where innocent people are hurt and abandoned, in a world full of ugliness and evil, we will tell stories. Through the stories we tell with our video

games, films, and television programs, we will show our audience examples of heroism, courage, and self sacrifice. Through the journeys of the characters we present, we will show our audience the value of each human soul. In this way, fellow media graduates, we will bring our culture beauty.

Theology and new evangelization graduates, our culture is plagued by relativism. Young men and women wander through life thinking themselves worthless. So many are confused about who they are and what they are meant for. You will teach these young men and women that they are meant for happiness, an eternity of being united to the Trinity. In this way, new evangelization graduates, you will bring our culture truth.

Business graduates, our nation was once a great nation. We were dreamers, visionaries, and innovators, but now in America, where everyone has a chance to be great, selfishness and mediocrity rein. Through your hard work and fortitude, you will do amazing things. You will provide for the needs of the people, and encourage excellence in your employees and co-workers. Through your leadership and innovation you will provide the world with goodness.

Our training here at JPCatholic has prepared us for this mission. However, before we set out to accomplish it, we must reflect on *how* we will accomplish it. For while our culture is starving for beauty, truth, and goodness, there is something it craves even more. If we do not bring this to our world, than nothing else we do, no matter how great, will matter.

As a media graduate, it is essential for me to remember the words of Saint Paul. "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels but have not love, I am a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal." (1 Cor 13:1) If I make the a film that depicts the beauty of the

salvation story in such a way that it brings all viewers to tears, but I look down on my production assistants and grow easily angry and impatient with my crew, how can I possibly bring my culture beauty?

New evangelization graduates, “if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” (1 Cor 2) If I bring the entire laity to a full understanding of the faith, but mock my fellow theologian because he has a slightly different, though equally orthodox, take on a passage in Genesis, how do my actions teach Truth?

Business graduates too, must remember the words of Saint Paul: “If I give away all that I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (1 Cor 13:3) If I spend all my energy building a business that feeds thousands of families and is profitable enough to give fifty percent of its earnings to charity, but I deny my own family my time and attention, what good can I bring?

Fellow graduates, before we set out to accomplish our mission we must remember that Christ has called us to a life of service, let us serve Him only in humility and with great love. Before we bring our culture beauty, truth, and goodness, we must bring our culture *love*.

Remember before we bring Christ to the world, we must bring him to our cast and crew, our employees, and our co-workers. Praise where praise is due, provide constructive criticism when needs be, but always and above all, be patient with those around you.

Bishop Fulton Sheen once said: “There are not a hundred people in America who hate the Catholic Church. There are millions of people who hate what they wrongly believe to be the Catholic Church — which is, of course, quite a different thing.” No one hates the

Catholic Church, society hates what they think the Catholic Church is. They see our mother as arrogant, judgmental, and self-righteous, not because she is, but because they have met Catholics who are arrogant, judgmental, and self-righteous. Catholics who could quote doctrine and scripture, who fed the poor and clothed the naked, but had not love.

"whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever would be first among you must be your slave;" We cannot judge the human soul. Only God sees the heart. Remember the story of St. John Vianny and the village baker. Which of the two is canonized? Which is greater? Treat everyone you meet like they are greater than you. As Christians we are called to treat all of our brothers and sisters as if they were Christ Himself.

Business graduates, as you grow in your careers, you may encounter a younger coworker. Perhaps he is not learning as fast as you did, perhaps he talks to much or is socially awkward. Before you snap at him, or gossip about his incompetence to the other employees remember, he is greater than you and that love is patient, love is kind.

Fellow media graduates, when a friend or yours makes a film that wins at a festival, while yours is overlooked, celebrate with him, be happy for him. Remember he is greater than you and love is not jealous or boastful.

New evangelization graduates, when you teach, remember that mom who drops her child off week after week, who does her best to make sure he has a catholic education, when she hardly has an elementary CCD education herself, she may not know the meaning of Transubstantiation or oikonomia, but she is greater than you! When you

speak with her, treat her with the utmost respect, and remember that love is not arrogant or rude.

Fellow graduates, when you are on Facebook, and you see that someone has posted a status that contradicts the teachings of the Catholic church, before you rush to their profile, intent on arguing them into a corner with your flawless syllogisms, thus gaining the applause of all your Catholic friends, remember there is a soul behind that profile, and he is greater than you. Defend the faith, stand for what is true, but do it only with humility and great love.

The homeless man, the single parent, the lonely teen, the man struggling with homosexual attractions, they are greater than you! You are called to serve them, bring them the love of Christ.

I ask you, fellow graduates, when you defend our beautiful faith, never argue, always discuss. Begin where you and your opponent agree then work your way backward toward your disagreements. This builds bridges rather than walls. Don't be afraid to listen, the Truth of Christ will stand up to any argument, and don't be afraid to admit when you are wrong.

As we set out to accomplish our mission, we must remember our weaknesses. It is impossible for us to love without the grace of God. Let us pray often for humility saying:

That others may be loved more than I...

That others may be esteemed more than I...

That, in the opinion of the world,
others may increase and I may decrease...

That others may be chosen and I set aside ...

That others may be praised and I unnoticed ...

That others may be preferred to me in everything...

That others may become holier than I, provided that I may become as holy as I should,

Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

This is not an easy prayer to pray, but remember living out your vocations will not always be easy. Times will come when you will be misunderstood, times when others will mock you, times when you are too tired to think, times when your project fails, times when you let others down, and times when you feel Christ is far away from you.

No one knew this better than St. Faustina. She was a mystic, who would receive visions of Christ. However, there was a period of time when He stopped coming to her. During this time she felt alone and abandoned. When at last she saw Him again standing at a distance, He said: "Faustina, come closer." She came toward Him. Again He asked her to come closer and again she came. This continued until her face was pressed against His heart. Yet again He asked her to come closer. "I can't come any closer," She responded.

Christ asked her, "what do you see?"

"I can't see anything," She replied.

He answered: "But look how close I am to you!"

Fellow graduates, Christ is close to you, though you may not always see Him. When you enter spiritual darkness, when you are depressed and lonely, when it seems all the world has turned against you and Christ Himself is far away, don't give up on your

mission. During these difficult times, remember again the words of St. Paul, “love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

“Love never ends, as for prophecies they will pass away, as for tongues they will cease.” (1 Cor 13:9) We are here today to celebrate our knowledge but this knowledge is only a shadow of what is to come. Some day this knowledge will pass away. “For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes the imperfect will pass away.” (1 Cor 13:9-10)

Fellow graduates, one day we will stand before the Blessed Trinity, and on that day we will discover what St. Thomas Aquinas discovered before he threw his Summa into the fire. On that day, all of our achievements, all our academic success, will be straw. For after a life time of trying to bring the world beauty, truth, and goodness, we will be standing before Beauty, Truth, and Goodness Himself. As Saint Paul wrote, “Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope and love abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor 13:12-13)

As you go out to live your vocations, trust in God and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide all you say. Our mission will not be easy, for there are demons within us and demons outside us. For this reason, I ask all the angels and saints to join me in this prayer for you.

“The Lord answer you in your day of trouble!
The name of the God of Jacob protect you!
May He send you help from his sanctuary,
and give you support from zion!

May He remember all your offerings,
and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices!

May He grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans!
May we shout for joy over your victory,
and in the name of our God set up our banners!
May the Lord fulfill all petitions!

Now I know that the Lord will help his anointed;
He will answer him from His holy heaven
with mighty victories by His right hand.
Some boast of chariots, and some of horses;
But we boast in the name of the Lord our God.
They will collapse and fall;
but we will rise and stand upright.

Give victory to the king, O Lord;
Answer us when we call." (Ps 20)