

**Walsh University**  
**Commencement Remarks**  
**Dr. Tim Collins**  
6 May 2023

Swords up! Swords up!

Welcome, Cav Nation!

Welcome families, friends, and neighbors of Cav Nation to your Catholic university. We are honored with your presence today for this most significant moment in the lives of these soon-to-be newest graduates of American Catholic higher education!

Swords up!

Are there any Alumni who are here with us for this special occasion? Please stand and be recognized as we welcome you home!

Will the sons and daughters in the Class of 2023 of our alumni – our now-legacy graduates – please stand and be recognized?

First responders and our military – active, guard, reserve, retired, or Vets – thank you for your service to us! Please stand and be recognized.

For all of those in religious life, in consecrated life, please stand and be recognized.

A shout out to our Campus Police whose active presence contributes in so many ways to our safe campus today and always. You honor us!

A shout out to all those who made this weekend possible – faculty, staff, coaches, commercial vendors, and partners. And a special thank you to those who have quietly and diligently “behind the scenes” prepared our campus and all our facilities available to us today.

Sixty-three (63) years ago, seven Brothers of Christian Instruction stood on this very ground and imagined a Catholic institution of higher education committed to students who would work and learn together so as to eventually heed the words of Brother Francis Blouin: “you must make a difference.”

Their Catholic faith guided them, and it continues to guide your institution today.

We find ourselves gathered to reflect upon countless hours of study, seemingly hundreds of tests taken, hours and hours of community service for others, and intense intercollegiate athletic preparation and competition – all leading to the completion of a Walsh Experience for America’s most recent higher education graduates.

Congratulations, to each newly minted graduate, to those who have supported you along the way, and to the faculty and staff and coaches of this great Catholic university that have committed to providing each student the continuation of their education – for life!

All y’all rock!

This year’s 637 graduates are a diverse group of students reflective of God’s plan and the world he created around us.

You have come to us from as near as North Canton and as far away as Australia and Nepal. You represent nine (9) countries and 30 states. You are earning degrees in 55 majors. One-hundred-and-fifteen (115) of you are scholar-athletes.

Ten (10 ) of you are the children of our alumni and six (6) of you are earning degrees today as family members of our employees, continuing Walsh University traditions within your families.

Our new graduates have made us all very proud in the classroom and with your community service.

When I look out upon you today, I see in our newest group of Walsh University alumni a bright future for our nation and the world.

You have now completed the requirements necessary and have earned your degrees. No one is giving you anything today; no “participation trophies” here.

While you are likely excited for what tomorrow may bring, you may also be sitting there pondering:

- Am I ready to fulfill my life’s purpose?
- Am I ready to serve?
- Am I ready to lead others?
- Am I ready to go forth into the world to take my place?
- Am I ready to apply the lessons learned yesterday to my environments of tomorrow?
- In short: *Am I ready?*”

Your Walsh University education has been “all about” this very moment in your life, making you ready, ensuring you can confidently answer that monumental question.

We have taught you an approach to education that is different than what a secular school provides and yet the same as has been done for 935 years in the Catholic tradition:

- That faith and reason both will lead you to the truth
- That we are to uncover and discover the truth – not create truth
- That there is an objective reality
- That you have a unique reason to be on earth, a purpose as unique as your fingerprint; you must now decide how to leave your mark
- And that you are empowered to take your place in the world for your intended purpose and will find true joy in the service of others

Joy – much deeper than simply *happiness*.

St. Thomas Aquinas, the Patron Saint for students and universities, tells us joy is the central feature of Christianity.

St. Pope John Paul II, writing an encyclical in December 1990, reminded us that in the Mission of Christ the Redeemer, which is entrusted to the Church, that “the Church addresses people with full respect for their freedom. Her mission does not restrict freedom but rather promotes it. The Church proposes; she imposes nothing. She respects individuals and cultures, and she honors the sanctuary of conscience.”

Thus, Christianity has been prominent throughout your educational experience at Walsh University. As we sought to teach you “how” to think, not “what” to think, we too have proposed and not imposed.

For you see, education in the 935-year Catholic tradition is focused on the formation of men and women of character.

This is the immediate and proper end of Catholic education: to make human individuals Christ-like.

“The true Christian who is the product of Christian education,” writes Pope Pius XI, “is the supernatural man who thinks, judges, and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason, illuminated by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ; he who is *the true and finished man of character*.”

Your formation as men and women of character is the primary end of Catholic education – your Walsh experience. The secondary end is the formation of useful citizens.

Fulton Sheen taught that the world offers each of us three words that guide our choices: *please, must, and ought.*

- I can do as I please. Or ...
- I must act in a manner that pleases me. Or ...
- I ought to take this particular action.

Quoting the Emmy-Award-winner and Venerable Archbishop Sheen,

“Of these three, we must choose *ought.*

That little word *ought* signifies that man is free.

Fire must be hot, ice must be cold, but a man ought to be good.

*Ought* implies a moral power distinct from a physical power.

Freedom is not the power to do anything you please so often expressed and acted upon in today’s ever-growing pagan culture.

You *can* rob your neighbor, you *can* cheat on your taxes, but you *ought* not to do these things because *ought* implies morality, duties, and obligations.”

For you see, he continues,

“The Christian doctrine of man affirms you cannot have any rights without corresponding duties.

I have the right to life, but I have, inseparably, duty to respect the life of others.”

This becomes the foundation of authentic social justice, contrary to the twisted language of today’s culture where all that is good is now presented as bad, and all that is evil held up as a public good.

The authentic social justice concepts you have been taught trace their origins back to Catholic doctrine thoughtfully laid out by Leo XIII in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and will see their future in how each one of you *ought* to live your lives.

The responsibilities you assume today, as one of only seven (7) people out of every 100 in the world to achieve any level of higher education, is enormous as you become our future leaders in the family, the workplace, your communities, and throughout society.

I urge you – take your formation and education and place it in service for the betterment of those around you, of those entrusted to you; this is what you *ought* to do!

If you remember nothing else of what is said today, remember this: Your greatest achievements will be marked not by what you do but by what you do *for others*.

We have also taught you – in and out of the classroom – how to:

- Communicate effectively
- Deal with complexity and ambiguity
- Develop and evaluate options
- And that choices that recognize the dignity of the human person matter, as does your individual honor and integrity

These are lessons and skills that will serve you well all the days of your life.

Now, I am going to pause to ask our soon-to-be graduates a final question and would like each of you to respond, please. **SWORDS UP** the person next to you. Respond loud enough that the families of our international students – all the way to Australia and Nepal – can hear you.

Here is the final question for our graduates that requires a simple yes or no

- Are you ready?

Your internships, global learning experiences, service-learning opportunities, and advanced studies did more than prepare you for that first job or career. They were designed to assist you in discovering your life's purpose and to finding personal meaning in the ways you build relationships with others.

- Are you ready?

In our residence halls, classrooms, on our athletic fields and campus gathering spaces, you did more than encounter others.

You learned the lessons of community and sportsmanship and honor and integrity. You learned how to be a good neighbor and a good friend, and you learned what it is to be “my brother’s keeper.”

You learned that you can be successful with something and need to be successful as somebody.

And when the global pandemic came into your lives you learned the invaluable lesson of how to adjust and handle life’s curve balls, lessons that will make you more resilient throughout the rest of your life.

- Are you ready?

Your time and experiences in this Catholic environment offered you the opportunity to witness faith and values in action – from the staff, coaches, faculty, other students, and each other.

You learned not only how to be a leader in service to others, but you became a leader in service to others.

- Are you ready?

The time you have spent here on our campus is precious to us. We are honored you chose Walsh University for your higher education, and as you embark on your future, wherever that may lead you, we know – and you know –

- You are ready.

This journey to your commencement was difficult. You have encountered many challenges and persevered.

You have never been alone. Through our relationships with others, we are all reminded that one person can make a difference, and a community of people can change everything.

If there is a single lesson that sums all of this up – it is this: Life is difficult and requires sacrifice.

Drenda and I come before you very, very proud of each of you – for your resilience, your leadership, and the charity you extended to others.

Your time in our community as a student concludes today – in this Commencement moment.

News Flash: Success, ladies and gentlemen, is never final.

The work ahead of you awaits. Today is not an end point but a transition point. It marks an opportunity to begin anew.

I urge you to embrace opportunities that come before you as you take your place in the world with confidence, with grace, with humility, always meeting others with charity and kindness, speaking that language that the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

As so, you will now step out of this Walsh experience. The moment has arrived when you must now step up to a life of serving others.

It has been our privilege to have been part of your journey, and Walsh University, your Catholic university, looks forward to accompanying you as your partner in *Education for Life*.

Finally, as we place into the hands of the First Lady of Walsh University – Our Lady of Perpetual Help – we pray for her intercessions for your continued safety, well-being, and impact as servant leaders modeling Jesus Christ in all that you think and do

May God bless You. God Bless Walsh University. And God Bless the United States of America.

Swords up!