

Walsh University
2024 Commencement Remarks
Dr Tim Collins
President
4 May 2024

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!

- 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.
- Bishop Dr. David Bonnar, Bishop of Youngstown, Stand and Be Recognized.
- Mayor Stephen Wilder, Mayor of North Canton, 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.
- Many Of Our Graduates Here Lost Their Secondary School Graduation Ceremonies As A Global Pandemic Was Unfolding Can We Take A Moment To Show Them How Proud Of Them We Are For Not Allowing That Instance Of Uncertainty To Define Them As They Continued To Chase Their Dreams?

Sixty-Four (64) 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.

This Year’s 599 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 Saudi Arabia And Chile. You Represent Nine (9) Countries And 28 States. You Are Earning Degrees In 66 Majors. Ninety-three (93) Of You Are Scholar-Athletes.

Eighteen (18) 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.

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 936 Years In The Catholic Tradition ... For 205 Years In The Charism Of Education With The Brothers Of Christian Instruction ... And For 64 Years In What Is Now The Walsh Experience:

- 1. That Faith And Reason Both Will Lead You To The Truth
- 2. That There Is An Objective Reality
- 3. That We Are To Uncover And Discover The Truth – Not Create Truth

We Have Also Taught You That You Have A Unique Reason To Be On Earth ... Just Like All The Rest Of Us Point Your Index Fingers To The Heavens, Everyone

Yes, Graduates – You Have 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, His Statue Stands Tall On Our Academic Quad, 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.

Contrast Your Educational Experience With The Vile, Anti-Semitic Actions And Activities and Language On Too Many Campus’ In America.

- This Is Wrong And It Must End!

For You See, Education In The 936-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-Expanding 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 Reform ... Contrary To The Twisted Language Of Today’s Culture Where All That for thousands of years has been Good Is Now Presented As Evil, And All That Is Evil Held Up As A Public Good.

The Authentic Social Reform Concepts You Have Been Taught, Here, Trace Their Origins Back To Catholic Doctrine Thoughtfully Laid Out By Leo XIII In The Late 19th 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 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 Watching On The Live Stream 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 Adapt And Overcome 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 In Service To Others ... 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 Your 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 – A Single Lesson That Is So Counter-cultural ... 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.

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 ... 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 Patroness – Our Lady Of Perpetual Help

- Our Prayers 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!