

Good morning, Valor, and thank you. Thank you, teachers and staff, for deeply loving us; Dr. Fisher and the board, for leading Valor with wisdom; families, for 18 years of sacrifice; and graduates, for your enthusiasm.

But today, Class of 2022, I will not congratulate us on our achievements or exhort us to reach the stars—not because I think we can't, or won't, but because I see the cost of letting performance alone drive us. I have seen us waver and at times, shatter under the mistaken impression that our everything hangs on our anxious striving. Have you, also, wrapped your love and effort and time around the axle of self-realization? It is exhausting, Valor.

But there is a better, a more beautiful, way, where performance comes second.

I have found this way presiding like a blessing over the Kettlers' Sabbath dinners, and undergirding Matthew, and blowing through pine forests. Christ calls it the generous life, and it depends on us living in the “unforced rhythms of grace.” Watch the phases of the planets, how the columbines come and go with the seasons, how the tide ebbs and flows. Nature does not pursue some stagnant life balance, and she does not spin herself into a desperate and constant state of stress. Do we count persistent busyness a virtue? Creation's hurry comes and goes—spring bustles and fall

lingers; let it be so with us. Join every club next year, but then take a season of rest. Create these margins, because in the margins we can live generously.

You are probably thinking, Bethany, it wasn't seasons of rest which gave you the microphone today. But it was. My Sundays are free from homework, and they erode my anxious striving. The Sabbath gives us hope to yes, succeed, but without our performance driving and consuming us. May we, Valor, have not only days but seasons of margin, because margin isn't nothing, it's holy, even efficient – for deeply discerning and selflessly serving, and graciously giving.

Vincent de Paul said, “He who is in a hurry delays the things of God.” Today I pray that the things of God would not be delayed, that they would come, even now, to us, amongst us, through us.

Friends, live with less hurry, live generously, and I will count this class as successful, joyful, and blessed.

Thank you.