

Beginning Your Future Fifth Week of Easter Friday, May 24, 2019 Acts 15:22-31;
Jn 15:12-17 All Saints Catholic Academy **Graduation** (A good life or a moral life
begins with self-examination.)

So before I go on any further let me congratulate you on your happy day. However the very meaning of this exercise is called **“commencement,” and it means “beginning,”** so I will not regale your guests with remarks about your extraordinary experiences or achievements, but rather **I will turn toward the future and the life ahead,** which is what a commencement ceremony is really about. We would be fools if we had no concern about our future, about the life that lies ahead of us. This of course is **the very reason you have been here all these years to prepare you for a life in the world as a disciple of Christ,** which is a decision that we all have to make every day.

The popular **feeling among youth has always championed the idea of more freedom and good riddance to the rules and strictures of childhood.** That’s how I felt when I was your age and so did my father and his father going back generations; it is natural. And we know that in high school there will be more freedom than there was in grade school, and then in college even more so as you move away from home; and at some point you will become legally adults. **There is much to anticipate and welcome in this natural process.**

However, recently my father died, and going through his things I found a very interesting article. It was by Walter Lipmann, a famous journalist of years ago. It was written in 1964. He quoted Thomas Huxley, and he said something I think you need to hear. He said a man’s worse difficulties, and here man means adult, an adult’s worse difficulties begin when he or she is able to do as he likes. Think about that. I will quote you exactly the way he put it: **“A man’s worse difficulties begin when he is able to do as he likes.”** Freedom is a tremendous responsibility and to some degree a burden. It’s one we need to bear willingly. The problem is **so many in our society are convinced that they will be happy when they can do whatever they want,** as if—and I am including many adults, even intellectual adults think this way—**as if happiness is a product of freedom.** But is this true? I believe you can tell it isn’t just by observing people carefully.

The real question is: **why do you want what you want?** Morality begins by reflecting on this question. If you simply assume whatever you please is good and worthy of your choosing it, you will not be a moral person or as people say today a good person. **A good life or a moral life begins with self-examination. Plato said, “An unexamined life is not worth living.”** That’s true in

every age. **Some things we desire are only apparently good.** Some things we desire are **really good, but not worth the price**, for example, a Lamborghini. A Lamborghini is a good car, but is it really worth what it costs? I would say, hardly. One of my favorite people is the maven of Omaha, Warren Buffett. Buffett is one of the richest men in the world, but he lives in a very modest house in Omaha that may be actually smaller and more simple than your homes or some of them. When fellow billionaire Bill Gates visited him, he actually ended up on the floor because one of the dining room chairs was broken. Things like dining room chairs simply are not important to Warren Buffett. I don't know what's wrong with Mrs. Buffett, but Warren doesn't care. The point is not that dining room chairs are expendable. **The point is we need to scrutinize what we desire.** There isn't perhaps one answer for everybody. Some things may really be worth something to one person and not another, but we need to scrutinize. And we have to have to ask this question: **Is this really good? Is this worth the cost?**

Now **there are things that are truly good and truly worth the cost**, like an education, a faithful spouse, healthy children, and a satisfying career. They are all truly good and they are worth sacrificing oneself for. **But even these are steppingstones on a journey whose end we cannot see.** We are not given to see it. We may attain fame, fortune, power, or great gratification in life, or not. **None of these things will actually assure us of happiness.** So their presence or absence is of no lasting importance. That is why **faith is important. It leads us into the arms of a loving God, who wants a deep and personal and lasting relationship with each of us for all eternity.** And this is the sole form of real happiness for human beings. Nothing else really matters in the long run. Now **this is exactly what we have been trying to show you at All Saints in as many different ways as we could think of.** It is lasting happiness that is the true object of a moral life.