

If you're like me, you'll find that the greatest adventures in life happen...at school. On our first day of classes at Fordham University in NYC, I had just finished my jog in Central Park, excited to study Plato's Republic with my students, all of whom were going to be teachers. Plato's hero, Socrates, explains that a great nation needs to divide its labor between three types of citizens: those motivated by desire, who produce the nation's wealth, those motivated by honor, who guard the citizens, and those motivated by reason, who rule over the government. Coming out of the elevator on the 11th floor of our building in Lincoln Center, I saw a number of students staring out the south-bound windows. One of them said, "Father, a plane just flew into the World Trade Center." I replied that this wasn't a very funny joke, but shortly realized that the student was not kidding. A few minutes later, the other plane followed. We watched the events unfold, not on a TV screen, but out our window looking due south.

From that moment, my life would be different, as it was for everyone in our country. It was the end of a naïve notion that our nation was safe and impenetrable. As you can imagine, classes that day were canceled. I had the honor of joining the priests of NYC who rotated around the clock in shifts for the next four months blessing the remains of the victims and ministering to the rescue workers. When classes resumed, my students were amazed at how the targets of the September 11th attacks mirrored, almost exactly, the three classes of citizens in Plato's Republic: the World Trade Center represented the producers as a hub of commerce; the Pentagon housed our guardians, the military, who protect 325 million people. The philosopher kings were symbolized by the Capitol or the White House, tasked with guiding the nation, setting its priorities, and executing its laws with justice and equanimity.

Needless to say, on September 11, 2001, the world changed drastically. Most of you students were born into a time of war. I think it's fair to say that over the past 16 years, two legitimate but competing priorities have stood in an uneasy tension with each other. The first is the desire to protect our citizens, our way of life, and the freedoms that we might otherwise take for granted. The second is the responsibility of an open society to look outward toward the world in friendship and peace, welcoming others to our shores, and enriching a nation of immigrants. For me, getting involved meant serving our military men and women as an Army Chaplain, with two combat tours in Iraq. We slept on Humvees, we sweated in scorching sun, we were rocketed, we grieved for our colleagues who would never return to their own families, and we found friendship, the kind only forged through shared suffering. I remember a rocket going off while I was hearing a confession in the chapel, and after the initial chaos, I went back to the chapel, and the soldier finds me and asks, "So Father, what about that confession?!"

Meanwhile, back at home, other brave men and women fought against ignorance and intolerance in the classrooms, on the athletic fields, and in the dormitories of schools like this. My own experiences eventually prepared me for perhaps the greatest privilege, namely, to be with you, here, at the Canterbury School. Here, teachers and coaches get to form the minds, hearts, and bodies of young people entrusted to their care: children, not just from our shores, but from around the world, young people who in turn give us hope. True to the vision of Nelson Hume, our school continues in the British tradition, particularly at Canterbury, where the Cathedral School had the mission of humanizing members of warring peoples, and establishing peace between them. As a Catholic school, it goes without saying that this must be a place of safety, where people protect, and encourage, and love each other. At the same

time, we never turn in on ourselves, but always look outward to the world in courage. We therefore honor and affirm the legacy of our students from other countries and religious traditions. In an atmosphere of friendship and understanding, we strengthen the bonds that should exist between peoples and nations, so as to strike at the very root of war and hostility.

So if you ever wondered what you can do for the cause of peace in the world, might I suggest that learning to think critically, producing a solid geometric proof, writing a powerful essay, learning to be part of a team, bringing joy and beauty to the world through the arts, and offering your efforts to God through worship and loving service to your neighbor, might be a good start. Believe me, you'll have the rest of your lives to contend with the cares of a broken world. The lives of so many here have already been touched by tragedy, political unrest, natural disaster, death. Please remember that our service members, to say nothing of our parents and benefactors, have struggled to provide us with a place of beauty and leisure so that we can learn, and grow, and become friends. We can show our gratitude to them by struggling to find the truth for ourselves in all its richness, and not be satisfied with easy answers to life's difficult questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Why do people suffer? What is the good life? How do I find it? What lies beyond it? As a newcomer here, I appeal to all our new students: hold on tight, and don't let go. It will get intense here, but if you give your whole self to your studies, your teams, your community, and your God, your life will be transformed before your very eyes. On September 11, 2017, take courage, and find God's presence in all that you do here. May the Lord bless you.