

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 3rd 2014

This season is filled with images and experiences of graduation and commencement ceremonies. Dignitaries share words of wisdom from ceremonial podiums as honorary degrees are bestowed. Being part of the Creighton community is such a joy at this time of year as I pray with our graduates and their families at the Baccalaureate Mass and have the privilege of hooding students who have earned their masters degree. And this year on a personal level my family is celebrating the high school graduation of my younger daughter.

I have always found it interesting that the two words graduation and commencement are used almost interchangeably. Graduation focuses on the completion of studies and conferring of a degree. Commencement speaks to the beginning of something new. Holding both of these perspectives makes the ceremonies and celebrations so special as graduates reflect upon their past accomplishments and look to their future.

In today's reading in Acts Paul addresses the church leaders of his church at Ephesus. Paul holds both the past and the future in his words. He reflects upon the accomplishments during his time building the church. Paul tenderly shares that he served the Lord with all humility and with the tears and trials that came to him. What a poignant and powerful reminder for the church leaders of what has been built and how they need to continue to bear witness to Jesus. In addition to bidding farewell, Paul's address is a commencement of sorts as he shares his plans to travel to Jerusalem. While he suspects this experience will be difficult he embraces the uncertainty of his fate as he is confident in the plan of God.

Paul's words bring me to reflection about my past experiences and my reaction to uncertainty of the future. How many times do I let my fears and desires get in the way of my bearing witness to the Gospel of God's grace? Paul heard warnings from the Holy Spirit that imprisonment and hardships await him. I wonder about the form of imprisonment in my own life. And what about the times I know the manifestation of imprisonment and find it easier in the short term to take the easy path and ignore the opportunities to speak of God's grace. I pray to the Holy Spirit to help me hold the past and the future as I embrace my calling to be a servant to Jesus and live the Gospel of God.

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