WELLESLEY COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT 1971

The Baccalaureate Service

and Graduation Prayers

The Rev. H. Paul Santmire
College Chaplain

Baccalaureate

Almighty God, who has called us to turn to you in times of joy, no less than times of trouble, in times of contentment no less than in times of anguish, we raise our voice to you this day in thanksgiving for your tree of life, nourished by your Grace and your Spirit. We give you thanks for all our vital roots in the past, blessed by you: the friendships we have made; the fresh ideas and the classical truths that have come to us, and stayed with us, in a living fabric of learning; the growth we have experienced personally, socially, and religiously; the perspectives we have developed on our common history; all refreshing us daily with wisdom and sensitivity and compassion. Help us never to neglect these vital roots in our past, Lord; help us ever to draw nourishment from them as we continue to grow.

O Lord of life, we who now feel the pulse of life in our veins, praise you, too, for our present, sustained and enlivened by you. We praise you for our bodies, with many colors of beauty. We praise you for our souls, with many images of goodness and truth. We praise you for our life together in our various walks of life, as we support and comfort one another, responding to the needs of the body and the potential of the soul. Above all, we praise you for this day, for this very present, as we live this moment together in your presence in this time of fulfillment.

Finally, merciful Father, we look to the future, now so clearly pressing in upon us. We remember that your tree of life *will* bear fruit, or it will be cut down and cast into the fire of judgment. So on this day of good memories and memorable celebrations we pray, each one, for a life of righteousness; for care to hear the cries of your little ones wherever they may be. Send us forth this day, O Lord, with a renewed spirit, to seek peace and justice and contentment for all mankind, to lose ourselves and our wealth and our positions of arrogant power, in order to find ourselves. Enkill in us this day an ever-deepening commitment to fight war and poverty and racism, and all those evil powers which oppress the spirit of man and hold him bodily in bondage. As we enter our future, Lord, teach us anew each day to grow the fruits of righteousness.

So, in hope, and in common dedication, we praise your tree of life, O Father, and pray that you will ever shine upon us with the light of your Grace and pour down upon us the invigorating power of your Spirit, so that we, together with all mankind, may ever have life and have it abundantly. In your Holy Name we pray.

Amen.

Commencement

O most merciful God, fountain of all goodness and freedom and unity, we pause before you this festive day to seek anew your blessing, your liberation, and your reconciliation.

Bless us, O Lord, as we remember the goodness you have poured down upon us, with no merit or worthiness in us. We thank you for the friend we discovered at 3 a.m. as we listened to Mozart. We thank you for that one scintillating paper in which we suddenly discovered the excitement of learning. We praise you for those teachers who went out of their way to accept us as persons. We laud you for the mystical aroma of that one Spring evening when we paused, as for the first time, to look at the stars and to dream dreams for our own future. Bless us, O Lord, as we seek anew this day the goodness you have poured over us, all the days of our life.

Liberate us, O Lord, as we see the challenges you have place before us. Help us to celebrate the vitalities of our bodies, in a time when anxiety threatens to reduce us to things. Help us constantly to renew our minds, in a time when profound reason is sacrificed at the altar of mindless impulse. Show us how to free ourselves from those mind-sets which hold us and our fellows in bondage: dissipate our racism, vanquish our chauvinism, transform our nationalism. Especially, Lord, we petition you to liberate those of us who are liberals; remind us over and again that you require deeds as well as words, new patterns of behavior as well as continued professions of principle. Liberate us all, O Lord, as we seek anew this day the freedom you have poured over us, all the days of our life.

And reconcile us. Take us under the love of your motherly wings. Unite us all: not that sham grey unity which seeks the middle point between black and white, Jew and Gentile, male and female, which seeks to ignore and abolish differences, but that deep, variegated unity, the fulfillment of our common humanity in the depths of our diversity. Make us one, O Lord, by [illegible] many unique voices into one cosmic chorus of justice and peace. Reconcile us, O God, as we seek anew this day the unity you have poured over us, all the days of our life.

And, finally, Lord, don't let us be taken in by any graduation rhetoric on this most rhetorical of days--even the rhetoric of graduation prayers. We put on airs of pomp and circumstance, even though you know we desperately search for meaning and hope and truth within.

So hear our urgent prayers for your blessing and your liberation and your reconciliation. Refresh our parched inner land with the fountain of your goodness and freedom and unity this day. Have mercy upon us. Forsake us not. In your Holy Name we pray. Amen.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace and justice and fullness of life, both now and forevermore.

Amen.