

Commencement Remarks

Rev. Stephen A. Privett, S.J., President of the University of San Francisco
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Like those before me, I also congratulate you graduates. You have earned our admiration and praise; what you have accomplished is no small matter. I also thank those who believed in you and supported you – your family, friends and mentors.

At this, my final commencement as president, in your name and mine, I thank our staff and faculty for their wholehearted commitment to your education. I ask faculty here on the platform to stand for one last round of appreciative applause. I also acknowledge our staff, who have given their time today to serve as marshals at your graduation.

I ask you now to take one final quiz. You need no paper or pen; you will not be graded. If you don't know an answer, move on to the next question:

1. Name the three wealthiest people in the world
2. Name the last three Heisman Trophy winners
3. Name the three most recent recipients of the Academy Award for best actress
4. Name the last three authors who received the Nobel Prize for Literature

The next set of questions:

1. Name three teachers who engaged and/or inspired you
2. Name three friends who have helped you along the way
3. Name three people you enjoy spending time with
4. Name a few people who make you feel appreciated and special

If the second set of questions was easier to answer, it's because the people who matter in our lives are not the ones with the most money or celebrity status or the best credentials. They are the ones who care. Sages of every age and culture recognize that worldly success has shallow roots while interpersonal bonds permeate through and through and endure to the end. Our society has developed vast institutions around things that are easy to count, not around things that matter most.

In 2005, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor unexpectedly announced that she was stepping down from the nation's highest court to spend time with her husband, John, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's prior to his death in 2009. At the nursing home, John fell in love with another woman, and Justice O'Connor visited the couple often. She admitted to being thrilled at sitting with them while they held hands together on the porch swing – because, she said, it was a relief for her to see her husband of 55 years so content, after having lost so much to dementia.

Psychologist Mary Piper in reflecting on Justice O'Connor's poignant and selfless love for her husband, observed that "young love is all about wanting to be happy; old love is about wanting someone else to be happy."

I wish you all lives enriched by deep and satisfying relationships – lives filled with people who care for you. Most of all, I wish you "old love" at a young age.

Now, the University of San Francisco welcomes you to its Alumni Association. You will be hearing from us.