

COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

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SUSAN P. DRINAN CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Mark this date, October 29th 2007. Remember this date, for now; this is now your day. Today, you have changed your life forever. You will now become members of a small, elite society, that society of people who have a college education. In all the world, only about 3% are college educated. You have truly been chosen to be special.

As chairman of the Board of Trustees, I give you our hearty congratulations. Many people have helped you, your professors, your family, your fellow students. But it is you who has earned a college diploma. Take great pride in yourself, you have accomplished something wonderful. Smile, yes smile, be proud. Go ahead; pat each other on the back. Give each other a high five! Today is a marvelous day!

Now, let's talk about your future.

You have completed your education or you will soon complete it. I know you believed you have worked hard, you truly have. Not even a war, not death, nor destruction has stopped you. I am in awe of the perseverance that you have shown.

But, this is just the beginning. Because you are now educated, people will expect even more from you. You will have to work harder than ever before.

You may have disappointments, you may have outright failures, however, no matter how difficult, you must go on, you must persevere. You all have been chosen to make the world better, and you will not fail.

I have used the word perseverance twice. I want to make sure you understand exactly what I mean. I don't have an English to Arab, or English to Hebrew dictionary. This is what a straight English dictionary says:

Persevere: To persist, to hold to a course or to a plan, to stay with a belief, (and finally, now listen to this) in spite of obstacles, it means: to persist in spite of obstacles.

That is just the definition. You have had a good start, but for the rest of your life you must keep your faith and persevere.

Let me give you some examples of three men and their perseverance.

You know the first one very well, The Archbishop, his Excellency, Elias Chacour. This man has spent his life to make sure that you graduates had the opportunity to have an education. He started with a few books; he laid bricks and painted walls. Time after time he would plead with the government; he traveled all over the world to find people who would help. He would spend 14 hours on a plane and then have to stand and give a speech and then go to the next town and give another speech, and no one wanted him to sleep and everyone wanted to talk about their problems, and then someone else says hurry-up, the next speech is in ten minutes, and off he'd go. And he does this all for you.

His faith gives him courage, and perseverance brings results. That is what is expected of every college graduate.

The next man was the most important leader of the free world in World War II, Winston Churchill. Before the war began, before 50 million people would be killed, Winston Churchill warned everyone; he said "do not trust Adolph Hitler. Hitler wants war; he wants to rule the world."

England didn't want another war. The people wanted peace, and justice didn't matter. The war came anyway, and only the English Channel, 40 kilometers of water, kept Hitler's armies from conquering England.

At the darkest time, Churchill spoke in parliament and said: "We will fight them on the beaches, we will fight them in the fields, we will fight them on the streets, we will never surrender. We will never give up, never. We will never give up."

He gave his entire nation the strength to resist. First comes courage and then comes perseverance. Just like Winston Churchill **YOU MUST NEVER GIVE UP.**

And finally the third man of perseverance, George Washington, the greatest American of all time. You know he was the commander during our War of Independence. It wasn't such a glorious war. The Americans lost more battles than they won. Many citizens sided with the British and there was never enough money for war supplies, but George Washington persevered. Seven years of war and hardship. Finally France helped to win the conclusive battle at Yorktown. It took courage and perseverance. And then the British wouldn't sign a Peace treaty for two years. And seven more years before the Constitution was completed. Through all of this, Washington led the country and was revered by many people. He was the over whelming choice for President. He served four years and then was reelected for another four years. Then he did the most astounding thing. He retired. He stepped down from office. It shocked America, it shocked the world. No one ever gives up power voluntarily. The world expected him to act like a king. A king stays in power until he dies. But, by stepping down, Washington was changing the world. The government belonged to the people, not to the President or

a king. Liberty was no longer an idea, liberty, and democracy, because of George Washington, became reality.

For two hundred years liberty has grown throughout the world. Not everywhere, and it has had many setbacks. But the world is getting better; there will be more liberty in your lifetime, but it will take perseverance, and more men of courage like Washington, Churchill and Abuna Chacour. Learn more about these men; then do this, put courage into your heart and perseverance into your soul.

You will receive an envelope; it is simply a congratulations card from the people you met at my church in America. Inside the card are some messages. One, is the word, perseverance. Read it, remember it, put the word into your soul. It is what you must do for your entire life.

Inside the envelope is also a coin. This is an American Quarter, worth a little over one shekel. Now that you are a college graduate, think of this as your first earnings. May you have many more earnings to come.

The face on the coin is that of George Washington. Whenever you hold this coin, think of his courage and perseverance.

One last point. On the coin are some words. In the front of Washington's face is the word liberty. My prayer to all of you is that you will always hold liberty close to your heart. At the back of Washington's head, just like it would be in the back of his mind are more words. It says, In God We Trust. In God We Trust. Not in George Washington, not in Winston Churchill, not in any man, but In God, We Trust. Trust in your God. Trust in your faith, and from this day forward, from the day of your graduation, October 29, 2007, go forward and do God's work.

Congratulations on your graduation. May the God of us all place His blessings upon you.