

Going to college is chaos. After high school students lead increasingly complicated lives. Everything changes: their social life, their nutrition, their daily routine, their prayer, the music they like, and knowledge of themselves. Not everyone survives college. Some are overwhelmed by it. But others somehow put order around it. They get up in the morning and to class on time. They turn papers in and complete exams. They make time for friends. They hold down a job. If you graduate from college, you've done something more than complete a degree. You have created order in the midst of chaos.

I wish I could tell graduates it's over. That now they're entering a world of order and the chaos is over. It's not. We call graduation "commencement" for a reason. It's just beginning.

Going from college is chaos too, and the world needs people with experience in creating order. A recent editorial in *The Kansas City Star* cited a shortage of workers in health care for the elderly. The *Star* offered a simple solution: higher wages. If you pay people more, you'll get good people. The paper is only half right. Workers deserve a decent wage, but they also need the right motives for work. Getting paid is not the only motive. Providing service is a better motive. Few people are entering helping professions. Nurses, religious men and women, police, and fire fighters all experience shortages. Too many graduates enter the workplace with a selfish goal: to earn a lot of money very quickly and retire early. Fewer grads say they have another goal: to serve their neighbor. Jesus said love your neighbor as yourself, but too many people love their neighbor after themselves -- long after themselves. Our world of chaos needs orderly minds. It needs people who see the complete human condition and work to make it all better.

The Book of Revelation closes the Bible by envisioning new heavens and a new earth. The former world is swept away; even the sea disappears. In the midwest, it's hard to imagine the impact of that image, written by a visionary exiled to an island. To translate it to our culture, even orange barrels disappear. John sees a new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to replace the old Jerusalem just destroyed by the Roman army. Of this beautiful city, the dwelling place of God, God speaks for only the second time in the entire Book of Revelation, saying, "Behold, I make all things new." God, who created everything out of nothing in the Book of Genesis, promises to create something else out of everything in the Book of Revelation. But until that day comes, we have chaos.

Graduates, we congratulate you, but I urge you to remember the challenging road ahead. You deserve the parties. You deserve some rest. You deserve good employment and a living wage. But you also have a task. Help us prepare the world for God's new creation. Wherever you see chaos -- in disaffected family life, in urban violence, in greedy employees, in countries at war, in the homeless of our city, in abused women, in frightened children, in the hungry of Africa, in hospitals, nursing homes, and prisons -- wherever you see chaos, help us create order and prepare the world for the new Jerusalem.