

CLASS OF '55 REUNION. ADDRESS TO BOYS MAY 22.

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INTRODUCTION. There are up to 200 billion galaxies in the universe. One of them is ours we call it "The milky Way". Our galaxy has 300 billion stars. One of them is ours we call it "The Sun". Around the sun there circle eight planets one of them is ours we call it "Earth". On the earth there are 7 billion persons. One of them is you. But who are you and why are you here?

Darwin would see us as organisms in evolution with monkeys as our far off uncles. Marx as workers, Capitalists believe we are consumers, politicians as voters, Sociologist as in society, Anthropologists that you are a being of culture. Freud suggests that we are essentially sexual beings shaped by a frustrated libido.

LIFE AS ADVENTURE. I want to suggest to you boys today that you should see yourself as CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien view us in the Narnia tales and Lord of the Rings. These two men were professors of English literature at Oxford University who chose, with others called the "Inklings", to compose imaginative tales. Their books should be read by every boy.

They declare that life is a great and glorious adventure which is filled with danger, struggle, conflict, failure, evil and good and yet has a final triumph and a home coming. The heroes of these stories are limited and untried persons just like you. Children and Hobbits, not yet men or not quite men, partial and incomplete who yet changed the order of their world (as any of you can). Your adventure starts now at your age. In this in-between time when you are leaving childhood and grasping manhood. Cultivate a sense of significance and potential, that has no reference to size and shape or colour that can overcome. As you grow in independence and autonomy the dream of this quest will become more sure.

COURAGE AND BRAVERY. Boys your age can be filled with anxiety. Fear of exams, fear of teachers, fear of the conflict between your mother and father, fear of death, fear of the future, fear of a bully fear of how to find a girlfriend, fear about how to get rid a girlfriend. An essential core value in adventure is be to be able to dare the threat.

Courage is like standing in the sea as a giant wave comes. If you turn and run it will catch you up and spit you from the sea or you can advance against it rising over it or diving under it and also with each successive wave until beyond the breakers you are master of the sea. Fears protect us when we are children but they are doorways to the future as we get older. We run to them not from them. The greatest warrior in the Narnia tales is Reepicheep the mouse. He sets out to find the Aslan's country with these words, *"My own plans are made. While I can, I sail east in the Dawn Treader. When she fails me, I paddle east in my coracle. When she sinks, I shall swim east with my four paws. And when I can swim no longer, if I have not reached Aslan's country, or shot over the edge of the world into some vast cataract, I shall sink with my nose to the sunrise."* In my own life the most rewarding developments have arisen from risking the things that frighten,

THESE STORIES PULL DOWN DISCRIMINATE THINKING. Lewis gives an absolute equality to the boys and girls in the story. There is no prejudicial gender tripe. And Tolkien has the fellowship he engenders to be of all the tribes and elves and dwarfs and men caught up in one accord. To think of others only in categories lets loose the prospect of genocide. Let me say that Apartheid was the bad news as it divided us but the good news most surely is togetherness and in building social cohesion. There is a new story to tell and you are part of the narrative in crafting a non-racial life together.

You are to glue our nation together. The word to each other should be to all , even the enemy, " I'll glue you". Nothing is more blessed than a generosity of soul that reconciles or unites or encourages or breaks barriers and builds community. We are held by two absolutes. We are humans and we are citizens, common being and in a common land. This reality is primary in the ethics of concord.

MAKE FRIENDS. These tales are about great adventures in human relations between individuals. What is a friend? He is someone to whom you have decided to offer an unconditional regard and support rising from shared interests and circumstances .And should you do this you should not tolerate a lie or gossip or a wounding word against the friend. And even if the friend is flawed, as he is sure to be, any correction of his life from you should be negotiated with the utmost gentleness and tact. CS Lewis exalts this love as "the happiest and most fully human of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue". A word to bullies, or those who would coerce others in their quest, this will never fill your own longing for a friendship for those that follow you will just be associates and sycophants.

BE A SERVANT .Those of you who have seen the movie or read the book will know that three persons take the ring to Mordor. There is Gollum who is hopelessly addicted by the allurements of the ring to the point that he has become a subterranean creature morphing into a frog . Frodo is also losing his self through the same power and when he puts the ring on he finds himself in a world of shadows. Sam is completely untouched by the power of the ring because his heart has turned to one thing only.. servanthood. He has given up his status and ambition for the good of another, Frodo. There is a warning and an example here. The warning. Don't get addicted. This will suck your soul dry and leave you as a husk. Get help. The example is found in Sam who by emptying himself to strengthen Frodo became the means of his triumph. Sam is the real hero of the story because he helped another to the fulfillment of his life destiny. And by the way, this kind of self-offering is what teachers do. These mentors and helpers construct with your cooperation, the architecture of your coming achievements. You have many doubtful names for your teachers. In your own understanding and in your appreciation call them in their likeness to this hero.. "Sam".

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. Lewis and Tolkien both produce figures or representations of divinity. Aslan the Lion and Gandalf are types of Christ and both authors have these characters in journey with the companions. Quite often they are absent and 'missing' from the tales but in extremis when the going gets tough and their journey frustrated or endangered they appear to rescue and bring solidarity. If you believe it or not I have the certainty that God is with you in all your quest, perhaps at times not seen or experienced, but always in your time of emergency or perplexity. He will providentially afford you grace and mercy and peace. You will not be abandoned.

AT THE ENDING. And at the end of the journey of life we will find it has no end. In Lewis's book the "Last Battle" a huge door open in Narnia that leads one into a glorious newly created world. In The Lord of the Rings Frodo and the Elves go down to the West in a boat to voyage together in the joys of friendship to the undying lands. Death is not a monster to be feared but a way into another world where there is consummation and completion and Joy , but be assured there will be other quests and ventures enough to daunt and challenge us. And most importance and most glorious, the cherry on the top, in this state we shall all be young again. Finally a stanza from C.S. Lewis's Magicians Nephew.

"Make your choice, adventurous Stranger,
Strike the bell and face the danger,
Or wonder, till it drives you mad,
What would have followed if you had."