Two nights ago I stood for a moment on the redwood deck of the Dominican Priory and, looking about me, realized, with some surprise, that tranquility dwelt upon this campus -- something I had almost forgotten in the past three years. Perhaps you have forgotten it, too, under the pressures of study and the accelerating demands the work here has placed on you. But it is a tranquility you will become increasingly aware of after you have left this place. There will be memories come into your mind—that you were among the first to set foot upon the concrete walk that runs along the ridge—that indeed you saw the ridge tamed and the wildlife withdraw and surrender the campus—most of the time—to a kind of civilization. You will have images of the valley stretching away from the library windows, and they will be tranquil images. And you will realize that the mesquite, which yesterday was thrashing wildly about in the hurricane rain, are truly the peaceful groves of academe.

Four years ago you entered this straggly grove. In the four years you have been here, the world has changed considerably. Automation is here; a new kind of education has taken over, a new Church, a new society. Great men have died—men whose names will reverberate through the ages—Winston Churchill, John the Twenty-third, William Faulkner, T. S. Eliot. And here on the streets of Dallas a young hero fell in a mighty drama whose pageantry and scope and form few people in the world were quite as well prepared to understand as you, who now sit tranquilly before me. You understood
because you have been vested with the great traditions—with the major literary, philosophical, political, scientific, artistic, and theological traditions—and you have been made different by the vestments you wear. Already you are public men; you are cast in the mold of heroes and, willy-nilly, you will serve that end. Who are you? Achilles? Odyseus? Orestes or the furies? Job or his comforters? Beowulf? Roland? Alyosia, Sonia, Ishmael, Lion or a little fyce dog—oh, you are a rare audience for whom I could call forth a thousand names in confidence that each would touch some communal reference among you. You are all of these and more, for these heroes tread the circles of your mind like Virgil to point out the way you must go. And there, too, scattered along the three levels of your minds, sit this faculty, ready to help because you are forever their pupils. And when you return to the sweet life, remember us. You bear a part of us into eternity.

You carry a portion of our hopes and our dreams. Whatever task God gives you in the building of a Christian society, may you do it well. And—if I may play the part of Virgil for the moment—remember, that when it seems like Hell, keep going. The way leads up.