

This was given to me years ago, but I think it still makes sense.  
jm.

Timothy S. Healy., S.J.

## **To Grow and Love and Dream**

*In his remarkable address to the graduating class of Georgetown Preparatory School, Father Healy, who is president of Georgetown university, offered some unusual and exceedingly wise advice to the graduates and their parents. (Washington Post June 4, 1978)*

What I would like to do today is to give you four of the principal rules from a book I haven't written yet. In the manner of that immortal classic "Monsignor Muldoon's Manual of Mortal Sins," this one is going to be called "Healy's Handy Guide. Book to College Going." It will be more expensive, but probably just about as useful as the guidebooks you pored over during the winter in the office of the student counsellor.

So here goes. The first rule is a double one: If you find what you expected, transfer at the end of the first year; if you find what your father expected, transfer immediately. Another way of putting that, is to say, if you can predict now what you're going to find in college, you will have been cheated—even if the tuition is free.

College is essentially a time of growth, of change. The major part of that change takes place in you. If the college you go to is any good, it will hit you like a ton of bricks. It will lead you to question every conclusion you have ever reached; it will lead you to deny lots of assumptions and remake them; it will refuse to answer many of your questions, because you're asking the wrong things. It will shake your strong beliefs and blow tons of cold air into all your warm hideouts; it will laugh at your emotions and cry at your humor. It will be a tough and cruel place only because it cares for you but seldom bothers to show it. It will torture you into the best you think you can do and, by mocking the results, make you do better. For perhaps the only time in your lives, you will know, existentially, that the life of the mind is soul-sized. You will be stretched till you squawk. And if you're not--transfer.

Rule No. 2 is delicate, but brief: *Get lost*. Colleges can be lonely places, so join a few things; the wrestling team or the chess club, the sodality or SDS, it doesn't much matter. Join something and lose yourself in it--or you'll end up with yourself all alone, and that's a sticky ending.

There's another meaning to "getting lost." There was once an old farmer who could read numbers but not words. So he looked at a road sign and said, "When I arrive,

I'll know how far I've gone, but not where I've gotten to." The old farmer has you dead to rights. For three years at least (four years or more if you're lucky) you will know how far the goal is--but not what it is, and that's as it should be. Maturity is sometimes defined as a tolerance for ambiguity; and ambiguity is a voyage into the unknown, in a leaky boat, under a lowering sky, for a haul that may not bear examination. To change Elliot a bit, "young men should be explorers," and when exploration ceases, you're not young any more, you may not even be a man any more.

Rule No. 3 is topical-I like it for its mad ring: *All relevance is relation*. I'm too fat to play at being McLuhan, and I hasten to add that; for all that it sounds like McLuhan, that rule is mine, not his. He hasn't discovered it yet. It has to do with wisdom and knowledge, with the man and not the student. It means, simply that the beginning of wisdom is the love of one other human being. With any luck you'll find one over four years--you might--even make it as many as three. But, if you haven't learned to love, you haven't learned anything at all. All education is ultimately moral--and no matter how much you learn it can succeed only if you come out of it free, and good and loving. You can indeed be all these and be illiterate. If anyone ever tries to tell you that any kind of literacy can be had at the price of any of these three, walk away-fast. It may take you a lifetime, but "Little children, love one another" is Western man's impossible dream; and he, like you, still has a long way to go.

My last rule picks up that, notion of dreaming: *Don't be too busy to dream*. The dream isn't the distraction; for the next four years it is the job. We, your elders, are now limited to dreams of the spirit. You, who are young, have no such limit. You, who will probably eliminate diseases and who will certainly colonize the moon and half the stars, will also share with your earth-bound elders the pain and the glory that makes us all men. But you have the edge on us, because you can still dream with both body and mind--while we can only laugh and grow fat watching you.

To explain the last rule I want to resort to my trade and quote Caliban. For me his lines about the magic island of Shakespeare's dream have always been the best description of what the four undergraduate years should mean. The magic island can be wherever we want to put it--wherever we are. But Caliban has the specifications:

Be not affear'd; the isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.  
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments  
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices  
That, if I then had wak'd After long sleep,

Will make me sleep again; and then, in dreaming,  
The clouds methought would open, and show riches  
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I wak'd,  
I cried to dream again.

If you're lucky, you'll dream. If time does to you what it has done to everyone older than you in this room, you'll wake. And if you're human, until you come to God, you'll cry to dream again.

I've talked all this time to the graduates, because today is their day, and with the natural selfishness of the young they know it. To them it's a day of winnings and congratulations; for you, their parents, it is something else again. What you suspect is true: These are, in a way, funeral rites. The "small boy" dies today. All I can say is: "Let him die." In less metaphoric terms, this means, "Let: him go." He'll make every mistake in the book--including all those of your own that you can still remember. But unless he's free to make them for himself, he won't learn from them, and until he learns he can't stop. So, let go. The mistakes may be bad enough to make him limp back for patching. If that happens, patch and then again, let go. The slogans will turn you off, and the posturing will make you laugh to weep, but the reality hasn't changed. Only the free man will ever find himself. So let him go free. Only the man who is free can ever find other human beings, including you; so let him go free. It hurts--and him as much as you. But only the free man ever finds his way to God.