



Charge to the Graduates

December 17, 2021

Dear Graduates,

It is customary—and my great privilege—to offer you a brief "charge" on the occasion of your graduation.

The Charge to the Graduates is a final message to the graduating class. It offers you a word of advice, encouragement, and counsel—and it sets out our hopes and expectations for you—as you leave this campus that has been your educational home. This is, of course, a bittersweet moment for us as we prepare to say goodbye ...

We cannot presume to know all the paths that you will travel or the opportunities you will seize, but we can offer the assurance that you are well prepared—you have demonstrated your willingness to work hard—and now it will be up to YOU to take hold of what comes next.

As a Christian university, we have the freedom and the opportunity to turn to Scripture as a guide and encouragement in all that we do. And tonight, as we prepare to depart from each other, we can take our lead from the Apostle Paul's message to the Philippians, written from a prison in Rome. Paul had established the first church in Europe at the city of Philippi. He and his people had spent significant time living and learning together, and the people he taught held a special place in his heart.

In his letter, Paul expresses a loving remembrance of the PAST, a celebration of the PRESENT, and words of strong empowerment for the FUTURE. Words of joy, fellowship, and hope. These are very appropriate words for tonight.

The Apostle Paul:

"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now ... And being confident of this—that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion, until the day of Christ Jesus. It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart ... And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight ... to the glory and praise of God."

...

Graduates, we will thank God every time we remember you. For ALL that you have contributed to North Park University.

And this is our encouragement to you ...

- Look back with joy and thanksgiving on your years here, celebrate this milestone night, and look to your VERY BRIGHT futures with HOPE!
- Keep learning, throughout your life. Continue to develop your gifts—and use them ALWAYS for God's glory and neighbors' good.
- And know that you can have deep confidence that 'He who began a good work in you ... will see it through to completion.'
- Just as we will thank our God when we remember you, we encourage you to thank God when you remember North Park.
- Pray for North Park as we will pray for you.
- Maintain and nurture your North Park friendships across the moments and milestones of your lives.
- And remember what every North Park graduate knows—the next generation of North Parkers, depends on the generation that came before.

Congratulations on this milestone accomplishment. May God bless you and keep you this night and always.

You are ready—and this is your time!

Mary K. SurrIDGE

President