

Vice President Mike Pence: A Tale of 2 Commencements

By now, you're well aware of Vice President Mike Pence's commencement address at the University of Notre Dame in his home state of Indiana over the weekend.

And, more likely, you're much more aware of the students who chose to "make a statement" by walking out of his speech. If not, you can watch the entire speech in the video clip above.

But that wasn't the only speech he gave over the weekend.

The vice president also gave a speech at Grove City College, the Christian liberal arts college in Grove City, Pennsylvania, that is also know the Center for Vision and Values, a media partner with Charisma Caucus. During that speech, there were no interruptions or staged walkouts—those were left for liberals outside—and the vice president delivered a powerful speech about perseverance.

The following is a transcript of that entire speech:

Thank you all. President McNulty, Mr. Chairman and the board of trustees; the distinguished members of this faculty, all the proud parents and family and friends that are gathered here, join me in offering our congratulations to the largest graduating class in the history of Grove City College. The great class of 2017.

It's a joy to be with you today. I look out across this gathering, I see 606 men and women of accomplishment, of character and of great promise. And it really is an honor for me to be with you all. Today is a day of celebration and appreciation. Especially for all of those who believed in you and saw you through. Many of whom are here today. Your friends, your teachers and your wonderful families.

Now let me say on behalf of the moms and dads here, I can attest that this ceremony is one of the proudest moments of their lives, too. Now I've been a governor, now I'm vice president of the United States, but the most important job that I will ever hold is husband and father to three wonderful kids. In fact, she's been mentioned already but my wife of 31 years, now the second lady of the United States of America, is with us today. Would you join me in welcoming Karen Pence to Grove City College.

Now, I mentioned before Karen and I are the proud parents of three amazing kids, one of whom just joined the ranks of college graduates this last month. So I know firsthand that while today is an accomplishment for all of you in the cap and gowns, it's just as much an accomplishment for your families. And you're going to be able to walk across this stage, I know you know in your heart of hearts because your parents and your loved ones gave you a foundation of love and education. They encouraged you, they prayed for you and in most cases, they signed a whole lot of checks to bring you to this day.

So before I go one step further, Class of 2017, why don't you go ahead and stand up, turn around, catch the eye of a loved one's in the crowd, just show them how thankful you really are, for all the support that made this day possible, would you please?

You know, it's especially meaningful for me as vice president to have the opportunity to address graduates of a college for more than 140 years that has fostered an identity of excellence and independence. A college that literally rose to national prominence by standing firm for the principles upon which it was founded. In 1876 in the shadow of the new birth of American freedom secured by a decade of the fires of Civil War, Grove City College was founded with a very simple mission: To preserve that freedom that had been defended and wrought through a quote, program

of intellectual, moral and spiritual education capable of pushing civilization forward on every frontier.

And to preserve its independence, history records that beginning in the 1980s, Grove City College refused any federal funding and defended its position before the Supreme Court of the United States of America, and to this day Grove City College is one of only a few colleges in the United States to refuse all federal funding.

So let me say to the graduates that are here, the diploma that you will receive today was minted in an institution of principle and independence and you can be proud of it for the rest of your lives.

You've received an education not just in facts and figures but in principled leadership, grounded in faith and freedom. Those who have stood where you stand today have left this place to become leaders – leaders in their communities, leaders in faith, in industry and in public life. And now, their legacy will become your legacy.

And it hasn't been handed to you. You've earned that seat you're sitting in today. You've read the books, you passed the test, you probably pulled a few all-nighters, and now you're ready to add your voice to the chorus that is America.

But as the Bible says, "To whom much is given, much will be required." I believe that you leave here today with one particular responsibility. It's what I came here to tell you. You leave here with a responsibility to lead. All of you without exception are called to be leaders, no matter where you go from here.

Now, some of you will walk in fields of faith, whether it be missions, pastoring or counseling. Many of you will enter into technology and industry, where you use your minds and your hands to turn dreams into reality. Some of you will

choose the path of law to uphold justice, right great wrongs. Others of you may heal the sick through medicine. Some of you may choose a career in public life, and a brave few may step forward to protect our families and our communities in the uniform of law enforcement or the uniform of the armed forces of the United States.

But while your paths may all be different, I would offer you today that the same call of leadership falls on each of your shoulders. And so to be leaders, I have a few thoughts.

First, to be leaders you must inspire those around you by being (inaudible) in light in every walk of life. Remember now, people follow people they respect. So first and foremost you must aspire to be men and women of character.

Secondly, servant leadership, not selfish ambition must be the animating force of the career that lies before you. For it's written, whoever would be first of all, must be servant of all. Your education these past four years has prepared you to lead. You hold within you all that you need to leave this place and succeed. All you need to add to it is courage.

C.S. Lewis said memorably that courage was not one of the virtues, it was actually a form of every virtue at the testing point. If you aspire to lead, you'll need courage because leadership brings both honor and opposition.

Anyone who dreams big will encounter those who think small. Anyone who dares to step forward will find those who'd rather they stayed put. And anyone who thinks they can will always hear from those who are sure they can't.

You know, you need look no further than a friend of mine as an example of leadership and perseverance: The 45th President of the United States of America, President Donald Trump.

You know, from the first day of our administration, and in the great tradition of this college, our president has been freeing the American economy by rolling back the heavy hand of big government. He's been expanding educational choice opportunities for some of our most disadvantaged children. He's been rebuilding our military, restoring safety to our streets, and I can't tell you how proud I am to vice president to a president who stands without apology for the sanctity of life and all the God-given liberties in the Constitution of the United States.

But as the president said just about a week ago in a ceremony just like this, and I quote, "Nothing worth doing ever came easy. Following your convictions," he added, "means you must be willing to face criticism from those who lack the courage to do what's right."

So I say to all the graduates here today don't fear criticism. Have the humility to listen to it. Learn from it. And most importantly, push through. Persistence is the key. Never quit on your dreams. Dreams may be deferred but they must never be abandoned. Now let my own small life be an example to you graduates.

My calling from the time I'm old enough to remember was public life. I grew up in a small town in southern Indiana. My grandfather had immigrated to this country from the land of Ireland. One of the heroes of my youth and of now was President John F. Kennedy. I got it in my head somewhere when I was a kid that if John F. Kennedy's grandfather came from Ireland, and he was able to serve in Washington, D.C., maybe someday I could, too.

So I did what so many of you have done, I worked hard, I studied hard, I pursued my dreams. And when I was not much older than those of you sitting here at this graduation, I ran for public office for the first time. Now President McNulty left this part out of the biography that he read,

because you see I actually ran for the Congress of the United States twice before I was elected on the third time. I ran in 1988, met my second-favorite president, Ronald Reagan, when I was a young man and a candidate.

When I wasn't successful, I tried again, and I wasn't successful again. I looked at my young bride, who hasn't changed a bit since that day, and I said to her, "Well maybe that's not for us." But I never let go of that dream. I never did.

You're going to face challenges in the days that will unfold after this day. Occasionally encounter a setback. But I want you to trust that dream that's in your heart and never let it go. For Karen and me, it meant going into a completely different business, it meant starting a family, starting a life. It meant really pushing on and trusting God for the path that he'd called us on. And then that dream came back around, and I had the chance to serve in that Congress, serve as governor of my state. I stand before you today deeply humbled to serve as vice president of the United States of America.

So hold on to your calling. Never let it go. Another president, Calvin Coolidge, put it this way: "Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with talent. Genius will not. Unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. When the world is full of educated derelicts," he wrote, "persistence and determination alone are omnipotent." And so persistence, men and women. Hold on to your dreams and drive forward.

From this day forward, to the Grove City College Class of 2017, you are called to lead fearlessly. Be men and women of integrity, with a servant's heart. Expect opposition and persevere. And lastly, have faith. For as the good book says, He knows the plans He has for you. Plans to prosper

you and not to harm you. Plans to give you hope and a future.

As you go from here today, live your life according to the precepts and principles that you've learned here at Grove City College. Strive every day to lead with courage and conviction in the places where you live and work. And in all that you do, have faith. Have faith that He that brought you this far will never leave you and never forsake you, because He never will. If you hold fast to him, to the faith that deepened in this special place and to all that you learned from this extraordinary faculty, I know in my heart of hearts you will not only persevere, you will prevail.

And I look out in the black robes at a sea of leaders that will lead your families, your professions, and our country to unimaginable heights. Grove City College Class of 2017, this is your day, the future is yours. Go get it. Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. {eoa}