

HOLY MASS FOR HSC STUDENTS

We offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass for you who will soon undertake your HSC exams. This is really the culmination of many years of education. On the one hand it can feel daunting and on the other hand it can be exciting; daunting because of facing these exams, but exciting because it also marks the beginning of a new world.

These exams may, in some part, determine what you do, but they do not determine who you are. Education is a noble pursuit because it is a share in the wisdom of God. All manner of education—whether it be languages or maths, science or music, arts or sport—reveals something to us of God Himself, for He is the author of all knowledge. It is why the real purpose of study is not to get this or that job, the real purpose of study is education for eternity.

The word “education” comes from the Latin *educere* which means “to lead out.” In the past, this was understood as meaning to lead out of of ignorance to knowledge. You and I are created in the image and likeness of God and this means that we share in His rational nature. We are created with the capacity for faith and the capacity for reason. Pope St. John Paul II said, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know Himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves” (*Fides et ratio*, n. 1). We are transcendent beings. Our fulfillment lies not in what is below, but in what is above. By study we use our God-giving capacity for reason, to seek to understand the things of creation which opens us up evermore to the Creator.

You, however, have been formed in a world that has sought to divorce faith from reason, to force an unacceptable and violent choice between science and religion. The Catholic knows that these two things are not at odds with one

another. As St. Thomas Aquinas argued, because the light of reason and the light of faith both come from God, there can be no contradiction between them (*Fides et ratio*, n. 43). If you don't believe this you will fall into nihilism or meaninglessness. Nihilism has no hope that there is meaning and believes that nothing can be true. Instead, all that remains is power and pleasure for no other purpose but themselves. And that is a life of emptiness.

You were created for greatness. You were created to be an image and likeness of almighty God. You were created to share in the divine mission and to make known the kingdom of God and to seek the salvation of souls. This is what study allows you to do—whatever that study may be—because you are called to be good and holy. If you become a doctor, be a good and holy doctor. If you become an accountant, be a good and holy accountant. If you become an electrician, be a good and holy electrician. If you become a builder, be a good and holy builder.

Remember that you are called to be Saints. You are called to do ordinary things in an extraordinary way.

Our Lord said, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (*Jn. 10:10*). Seek out the fulfilment of your humanity. You will find this in Christ. Be attentive to your studies, whatever they may be, because education is a gift from God. Be diligent in your work, because all honest labour is noble. Be loyal to your family and your friends, because you must seek their salvation just as much as your own. Be faithful to the Mass and the Sacraments, because these are the doors of heaven and the gates of paradise.

Pope St. John Paul II closed his encyclical on faith and reason by imploring the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who we honour as the Seat of Wisdom, for all those who devote themselves to seeking wisdom. He prayed, "May their journey into wisdom, sure and final goal of all true knowledge, be freed of every hindrance by the intercession of the one who, in giving birth to the Truth and treasuring it in her heart, has shared it forever with all the world"

(*Fides et ratio*, n. 108). In these coming weeks, entrust yourself to the Blessed Virgin Mary who is the mother of Truth Himself, and place yourself under her watchful care. Believe that when you abandon yourself to her she will lead you through it all and that whatever may come you will be held in the care of divine providence and you will become who you were created to be.

It is good to have an open mind, but just not so open that your brain falls out. In a world that demands you do what is popular, you must do what is right. Be good. Be holy. Be Saints.