

GRADUATION 2009



During the Seminary's 213 commencement held May 28, 2009, 66 students earned their

degree. [Check out pictures of the event.](#)

Commencement Program

Baccalaureate Sermon Preached by the Rev. Dr. Charles Partee, P.C. Rossin Professor Emeritus of Church History

Commencement Sermon Preached by the the Rev. Dr. Russell Richey, Professor of Church History, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

CHARGE TO GRADUATES

YOU ARE THEOLOGIAN!

William J. Carl III, Ph.D.

Commencement always produces a mixture of feelings, doesn't it? You're glad to have all those exams and papers behind you and to be through with school and finally getting out, but at the same time wondering if you're really ready. I remember graduating from seminary in the early 1970s, looking around with a lump in my throat thinking how silly we all looked in our caps and gowns. And then it hit me, "Hey, I may never see some of these people again." Then I thought, "Hey, I'm glad I may never see some of these people again!"

But, we who are your teachers do not think that. We're sorry to see you go. We've grown to love you and to love sharing all we know with you. We've enjoyed watching you grow, watching you stumble and fall then pick yourself up again spiritually and theologically. But now we have to let you go whether we like it or not. We've taught you all we can for now. Oh, there's more to be sure, but you will have to discover it on your own. And that's going to be the fun part.

After all, you are theologians now—that's right, theologians for your congregations and your parishes, for the Church, and for the World. Let that sink in for a moment. You are theologians. You may not feel much like theologians. You may think "I don't know enough to be a theologian." And you're right; you don't know enough to be a theologian, not yet. But you are whether you like it or not. I've got news for you—some in your congregation are going to know more Bible and theology than you do. And they are going to be your mentors, and that's okay. Learn from them. Even the great Reinhold Niebuhr admitted that in his *Leaves from the Notebook of a Tamed Cynic*, which

if you haven't read, I strongly recommend. It will help you deal with the relentless regularity of Sunday mornings. It will help you deal with all the people you're going to have to bury; and all the people who will get in your face on a Sunday morning right before worship and say things like, "Preacher, if Jesus knew what was going on in this church, he'd be rolling over in his grave!" which is an interesting theology of the resurrection. You are theologians, whether you like it or not. And to be the theologians God calls you to be you will have to keep studying and reading and learning for the rest of your life. Keep growing intellectually and spiritually because if you don't you will burn out.

When I taught New Testament Greek at Union Seminary in Virginia back in the 1970s and early 80s, I always gave the same speech the last day of Greek class. I said to the students, "If you will just translate two verses a day, every single day, you will be able to keep up with your Greek. Just two verses a day." Years later after I had gone to a parish in Texas, I was on a trip somewhere walking through Reagan National Airport when one of my former students walked up to me and said, "Dr. Carl, do you remember you taught me Greek at Union Seminary years ago?" When I did remember him he continued, "Do you remember that you challenged us to translate two verses a day?"

I replied, "Yes."

"Well," he said, "I've been doing that ever since."

"Really?"

"Yes, I've been translating two verses a day."

"That's great!" I said, to which he replied, "Yep, the same two verses every day! And I've really got those down."

PTS Graduates of 2009, you are theologians. Keep studying and learning because, after all, seminary's the easy part. But, for you, the real exam begins tomorrow! God bless you all.



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