

Chapel

July 14, 2019

Strength in Diversity

Intro: The General - Dispatch

Hello and Good Morning! I am very blessed to be here speaking to you among the robin and the birches. This is a special chapel for me not only because it is my first, but also because you are a special audience. You are the stitching that sews together the two halves of our summer, the full time campers. This chapel represents a halfway point that signals the 2019 summer slipping away from us, and also to days well lived. We will soon have 65 new half time campers who are at this moment just itching to come join us.

Different Experiences

I sometimes feel like these half time campers. I came here when I was longing for a place to call home but it took me half the summer of my life to find it. When I first came to Maine, Aidan Prior picked me up from the airport and the Florida in me said, "Wow, look at those mountains." He just grunted in reply, as Aidan usually does but I realized that in Maine, I was different. I was face-to-face with my fears of being different and fitting in much like these incoming campers will be, and I'm willing to bet you were too.

I'm actually a little curious about something... Hmm...

Raise your hand if you grew up in Florida.

Raise your hand if you have ever spent at least 6 minutes looking at the cracks in red pine bark.

Raise your hand if, "The new life that comes with showers," is your favorite line in the Timanous Prayer.

Raise your hand if you love listening to the birds at council fire.

Were you watching? Each of you had a unique journey on your way to Timanous. I'm not talking about buses or planes, I'm talking about your whole life and all the experiences in it. Those last three, those are my experiences. Notice how most of you had a little bit of a different answer?

Some choices you have the freedom to decide for yourself and for others, you didn't have much of a choice at all. I didn't have much of a choice when my family decided to live in Florida. I didn't have much say in being white. I did choose, however, to make Timanous my home after taking longer than most to find it.

Nature teaches us lessons that are simple, long-lasting, and pure. Nature teaches in a way where you must listen carefully and look closely to fully understand what all is at work. I hope when these second half campers join us this coming week, you also look closely and listen carefully to what they have to teach you. Hopefully, you will find in your cabin mates or co-counselors the comforting warmth or excitement of shared experiences. More than likely, you will find experiences and stories that are different than yours.

I am asking you to be loving and accepting of difference, just as you are of sameness. You can do more than tolerate each others' differences, especially when it is easy to seek out those who are similar to you. I hope that as you go through the rest of this summer, you learn about and appreciate, maybe even love what your cabin mates have to offer, sameness or difference, just as nature intended.

If you would please rise in singing If I Had a Hammer

Song 1: If I Had a Hammer

You Belong Here

Looking around, there are so many species of trees and plants, much to the displeasure of campers going for their Land Honors. Those who are wise in the ways of the woods can easily

pick out a staghorn sumac or balsam fir from the rest. Each species has its own place in the wild. The tall pine trees know they belong. Even the dragonflies that dart across the pond have a spot here at Camp Timanous.

To those of you who might feel like you are the only one or struggle to feel like you belong, I want to speak directly to you. Maybe you are thinking about who you have back at home, or there is a pain chewing at your heart. Maybe at camp, it seems like there is something different about you. I want to say to you that we are so lucky to have you here and that you are making Timanous better, and stronger just by being here. Just as each species of animal and plant has its own place in the forest, you belong here because of your uniqueness. You are enough.

Now, I don't know about you but when I find a rare creature during a nature period, I get so excited. How cool is that!? How lucky are we to have found it. I wish people would show the same enthusiasm and appreciation for finding uniqueness in others. You all have something to add! Teaching some of you how to spot wintergreen among the understory, knowing nature, being true to myself, that's what I offer up to you. All of you, these new campers, we all have something unique to offer. Share your uniqueness with your fellow campers and we will all be stronger for it. Diverse views are not only good and helpful, they are vital to our growth as young men and to the continued growth of Timanous.

Next is a song that Gabby and I dance to when we are missing camp in Nashville. I'm thinking it will remind you of the good times had here when you are campsick during the year. Please rise and join us in singing Dancing in the Moonlight which is an insert in your book.

Song 2: Dancing in the Moonlight

Include

"We should indeed keep calm in the face of difference, and live our lives in a state of inclusion and wonder at the diversity of humanity."

Some borrowed words from George Takei.

When I was a first year counselor, all I was looking for was to be accepted for who I was. I didn't really find that until this year, my fourth year at camp. Each of you will have an opportunity to include more people than you ever have before in this second half. You are in a position to open up your arms and help to instill the Timanous spirit of generosity and inclusion into these incoming campers. There are those who have accepted me for who I am like Mark Endrizzi, Will Danforth and many others. You are probably someone who invited a new friend to come play a game during quiet hour, or someone who was open to trying new things with a new cabin mate. Take a second to think, "What have I done to include people around me?" to lend my hand out to someone who needed it. Think about moments when you were included.

Sometimes, we mess up. Sometimes we say things that raise eyebrows and sour faces. In these moments, we all can show a little grace and help others to understand why. Why it hurts to be called names and why it hurts to ignore our individual stories. To those of us who have been hurt, we can show grace and understanding. On both sides, I encourage your heart to soften and be brave enough to include those who have excluded us. When we circle around, arm-in-arm at council fire to recite the Timanous prayer, do we leave some campers out of the circle?

Please join me in reciting the Timanous Prayer

Timanous Prayer

We thank thee, O Lord for the joy of fellowship
The beauty of our surroundings: The tall pine trees, and sparkling lake,
The life which teems around us in the woods.
For the skies and clear waters.
We thank thee for the love of doing things,
For active bodies and minds alert.
For the excitement of something new
And the comfort of things which are old.

For all these we give thanks;
For the cool and quiet of evening,
The restfulness of night,
The glory of starry skies,
And the new life which comes with showers,
For our mothers and fathers who have given us our homes,
And for the trials which help us to know ourselves.
For all these, we give thanks.

As you leave these pews this morning, and you bumble your way down the path back to your cabin, I hope you know that you have the power to show others what it means to be strong by including them.

Always remember that Nature is Everywhere. Thank you.

Please rise for the Salutation of the Dawn

Salutation of the Dawn

Look to this day for it is life, the very life of life. In its brief course lie all the verities and realities of your existence: The bliss of growth; the glory of action; the splendor of beauty. For yesterday is already a dream and tomorrow is only a vision. But every today well lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness And every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well therefore to this day! Such is the salutation of the dawn!