

Albright awarded the Bishop an honorary Doctor Divinity degree at this ceremony, and these are his remarks.

**CLASS OF 2011
ALBRIGHT COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE
CEREMONY
MOST REVEREND JOHN O. BARRES
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF ALLENTOWN
MAY 22, 2011**

Albright College Class of 2011: Just a few weeks after the 2004 presidential election, I was invited to a gathering of civil lawyers that featured the political commentator David Gergen as the keynote speaker. Gergen was a speech writer and advisor for Presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton.

In his book *Eyewitness to Power*, Gergen shares some observations on the nature of presidential leadership, and leadership in general, from his vantage point as a speech writer who constantly tried to position presidents in a positive and inspirational light.

During the question and answer period, someone asked him: “What do you look for in a future president?” There was a pause in the response. Most of us began to speculate on what his answer would be. Many of us thought logically that he would point to experience in Foreign Affairs. Others thought he would point to an understanding how to move issues and bills through Congress.

But his actual answer was both disarming and profound. He said and I paraphrase: “I look for someone with a history of strong, loyal and lasting friendships throughout their lives.”

My jaw dropped. This is a man who had personally witnessed the unfolding of Watergate, the end of the Cold War and so many other watershed presidential events and crises for the better part of two generations.

And yet rather than focusing on politics or policy, he was convinced that a track record of deeply grounded, enriching friendships is the best indicator of future presidential leadership success.

I have never forgotten his answer and have used it as a sort of “examination of conscience” about the quality and depth of my own friendships ever since. On this, your graduation day, I suggest you do the same.

Most of you are not headed to the White House, although, who knows? Perhaps some of you are. Your future leadership may be in education, social work, politics, communications technology, medicine, science, religion, economics, finance or international law.

Whatever destiny your inner voice is leading you to, apply this same lesson – a lesson that if lived well will enrich and broaden your career path, your future marriage and family life, and the unique contribution you will make to the world.

Review the history of your friendships from the time you were a small girl or boy to the present moment. What friendships have lasted and grown and are vibrant to this day? What friendships ended, faded or were rekindled? What have you learned?

Humility, generosity, loyalty, honesty, forgiveness, sacrifice, sincerity, going the extra mile, helping our friends through crisis, turmoil and suffering – so many virtues go into rock-solid lifelong friendship.

Gather the experiences of the past four years at Albright College. Sacrifice for your Albright classmates and the friends you have made in the classes above and below you. Be determined to leave this campus today with lifelong friends.

Social networking tools will be helpful to keep in contact. But true friendship transcends Facebook, twitter and text messaging. True friendship means being face to face with our friends and finding the face of God there.

The enriching friendships of life are a sign to us of Divine joy working through us and in the world.

JRR Tolkien, the author of *The Lord of the Rings*, wrote a letter to his son at the end of his life, in which he urged his son to root every human relationship in the Divine. He said that when we ground our friendships in the power and love of God, then we find “true romance, true honor, true glory and the true way of all our loves on earth.”

God so often reveals our destiny through the friendships of life. They are a fundamental building block of society and pursuit of the common good. They are an essential component of leadership that is both visionary and execution-oriented, leadership that can change and move the world.

The timeless wisdom of the Old Testament’s Book of Sirach still speaks powerfully in the 21st Century: “A faithful friend is

**a sturdy shelter; he or she who finds one finds a treasure.”
(Sirach 6:14)**

**Albright College Class of 2011, may each one of you be that
treasure for many, many different types of people in the course
of your lives. God bless you all.**