



OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER

Holding on to Hope

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Chapel Talk addressing the
Boston Marathon Bombings

Moseley Chapel

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We have altered our normal routines today to gather together in this place of reflection because in our culture in general, and in our community in particular, this is one of the ways we find comfort in periods of difficulty. When events around us shake the foundations of our lives, and give us pause to question the goodness in and justice of our world, we seek each other out and we set aside time to reflect. The last many months have presented more challenges than we can begin to understand. A bit further from our Byfield home, we witnessed the senseless loss of life in Newtown in December. Closer to home, individual members of our community have struggled with overwhelming fear, grief, and loss in their families. This weekend some of you heard that Tim Chaloux, a senior at Pingree and a graduate of the Pike School, died early Saturday morning when his car veered off Route 128 into a wooded area. Some of you knew Tim, and many faculty members will remember that Tim's brother, Chris, graduated from Governor's in 2005. And then yesterday all of us learned of the tragic bombings at the Boston Marathon, and some of us witnessed first responders rushing to, and frightened people fleeing from, that horrific scene. It is difficult for us to find meaning in the senselessness of such events. As Jean suggested, it would be easy to feel hopeless. It would also be easy to feel numb.

I don't know about you, but I too often find that I hear news of tragedies elsewhere and take little notice because I don't see that it affects me, or my family, or my community? In a practical sense this is probably a good thing. None of us can feel the intensity of every horrible event that occurs in our world. It would be too much for any person to bear. But if we shelter ourselves too much from the pain of these events, we lose an important element of our humanity. Our challenge, I think, is to experience the loss and pain of tragedies like these without losing hope. Our sense of community, the sense of connectedness we have to those around us *requires* that we care. It requires that we ask ourselves and wrestle with the hard, but obvious questions—What's wrong with people? How could someone do something like this? Why did a life have to be wasted in that way? What can I do to help protect those I love from senseless loss? Struggling with rather

than avoiding these questions is what it means to be a thoughtful and engaged citizen in a world that despite these recent events is still full of much more love than hate.

It would be understandable for us to retreat into a shell of numbness, protecting ourselves from the darkness and despair that come from wrestling with tragedy. But our response to senseless loss cannot be apathy. It is in wrestling with tragedy that we are stirred to action. While it might seem that there is nothing we can do, I believe there are practical and symbolic ways for us to make a difference. First, we can identify and fight for causes we believe in, whether that is the battle against cancer, or an effort to make sure that when young people get behind the wheel they are safe to drive, whether that means being awake and alert, or sober, or free from distraction.

One other way we can deal with loss is by taking time, as we are doing now, to reflect. Whether you are a person of faith and believe that prayers can bring comfort to those who are suffering, or you simply want to take a moment to consider the suffering of others or share in the sorrow of those who have lost someone close to them, I believe that moments of silence are important. Whether you are offering prayers or simply observing a moment of respectful contemplation, I know that when I tell a family that we have taken time to think about them, it is a powerful statement that brings them real comfort. In gathering together to reflect, we take a stand for hope. With that in mind, I invite you to join with me in a moment of silence for the Chaloux family and other families dealing with loss, and for all those affected by yesterday's bombing.

The 14th Dalai Lama said: "There is a saying in Tibetan, 'Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength.' No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster." In the midst of whatever sorrow or uncertainty we may be experiencing, let's hold on to and comfort each other, honor those who have been affected by yesterday's bombing and other painful events in our thoughts and prayers, and in so doing, stand up for and hold on to hope.