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Next Step in Life by Carl E Beyer

We take many steps in life. I am reminded of this with my daughter's graduation from Rio Rancho High School. Our first step in education usually is our kindergarten graduation. I, personally, stumbled on this step. If I may quote from my baby book: "We started Carl in School September '65 but he could not make a go of it. Decided to take him out and wait another year. He was just 4 years old." I was the only Ivy Leaguer I know of that flunked out of kindergarten. While we may stumble in life we must continue on. I am sure that at that age I was not thinking of such things, I was just stumbling around.

While we accomplish other steps before our high school graduation, this is an important one. This is a step that, if done correctly, is one of the first real educational accomplishments of a young person. While a parent may guide, pester and pray, it is up to the individual to do the homework, study for the tests and to complete the tasks needed to get that high school diploma. This is one of the first accomplishments to be really proud of, and a foundation for future accomplishments.

The next step after graduating from high school can vary greatly and each graduate should consider which path they want to travel. I will write about some of these paths while recognizing that, as individuals we may choose one or many of these paths as we walk through life. It is important to choose a path. You can always step off this path and start another path if you find yourself traveling down the wrong path.

One positive path would be to continue on with your education and attend college. The first year of college is spent mainly fulfilling the general education requirements of college so you do not need to decide what your major will be yet. There is one thing certain about seeking and getting a college degree, and that is, that it will never harm you and you will possess it for life. If your parents have the means to assist you, then now is the time to go. It is much harder to return for that diploma after you have entered the workforce.

Another option would be some kind of trade school for training. Examples of these would be for welding, auto mechanics, plumbing, carpentry, computers and other trades in which certifications can be achieved. Attending a trade school will allow you to enter the work force sooner while still putting you on a solid track for a good paying career. These certifications usually allow you to learn and work along the way. So, you can start out as an Electrician Apprentice and eventually achieve a Master Electrician certification.

A very noble option would be to choose to serve your country in the Armed Forces. You can choose between the Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy or Coast Guard. The services will not only pay you while they train you, but they will also give you a connection to our country not acquired any other way. This option can be as short as four years, or allow you to make it your lifelong career. When joining please choose carefully what occupation specialty you choose. The services have almost any job you can think of, as long as you qualify and there are openings. This particular option also allows you to leave home and recreate yourself. If you find yourself

surrounded by “buddies” who only bring you down, then leave them behind. Present yourself and live the life of a noble warrior.

I am sure Father Mansfield would want me to mention the ultimate career choice of a vocation serving the Lord. The Roman Catholic Church is in need of priests, nuns and brothers. I cannot imagine any other choice that could make a Roman Catholic family prouder than one of their own devoting their life to God. There are many options to serve the Lord besides being a traditional priest or nun. There are sisters and brotherhoods that serve by meeting a wide range of needs and there is certainly one that could be for you. While a firm commitment is desirable most have a discernment process for assisting you with making the final decision.

Some of you may choose to go straight into the work force with the carefree abandon of youth, seeking the immediate quick dollars. This path can also work, if you are diligent and seek promotions. This path is affectionately known as the road of hard knocks because it can be rough but it will certainly be a learning experience. Do not be afraid, though, to step off this path, if necessary, and seek one of the previous paths mentioned.

Others may see the youth as a time to pursue a short term path that only a youthful body allows. Some examples of these could be pursuing a sports profession or doing a hike across country. While youth allows such dreams to be fulfilled, be sure and set a time limit, and plan out the next path in life to take.

Some of you are very uncertain of what path to take and, therefore, you may choose no path. I urge you to not take this dead end path. After your high school graduation is the time to start down a path. Do not worry about picking the wrong path because you can always start again down a different path.

For all you graduates, now is the time to take whatever assistance is offered and head down the path to being productive Roman Catholic Americans. Look around and find those family and friends that are positive in your life, and discuss with them what path they see you taking. Sometimes our view of ourselves can be mostly imaginative, so step back and see what those close to you see as your strengths. Graduates, inquire about your weaknesses as well, not for self deprecation, but to ensure that these weaknesses do not push you off your chosen path.

One last note, you should avoid mistaking your dreams for your path. If you dream of being an artist, find someone with an unbiased opinion to advise you whether you should pursue a career as an artist or make this a hobby instead. If you dream of being a stock broker and cannot keep two cents in your pockets, you may want to reconsider. If you dream of being a teacher but cannot stand kids, then perhaps you should reconsider. Find your strengths, and God willing, you will find your path and you will be able to start your life as an adult on a positive note.

God Bless You all. Go forth and find a young person to mentor as they seek out their path in life.