

Baccalaureate Service

Haigazian University

Sunday, May 31, 2026

7PM

President's Word

Dear Class of 2026,

We have indeed reached this moment and gathered for this long-awaited Baccalaureate Service, a milestone we have never taken for granted, especially in the past three months.

My message on this occasion is simple, yet challenging.

As you stand at this important threshold of graduation, some of you receiving your second degree from Haigazian University, I encourage you to cultivate one virtue that will sustain you throughout life: **gratitude of the heart**.

Many intellectual and social movements of the twentieth century taught us an often-neglected value: self-worth. Indeed, a healthy appreciation of ourselves and of others is essential. We are persons of dignity, created in the image of God and called to honor the worth of every human being, whether near or far.

Yet gratitude of faith takes us further. It directs our attention beyond ourselves to the Creator. It teaches us to value God above the passing idols of success, status, power, self-interest,

and self-promotion. It calls us beyond the gods of our own making, those we create, serve, and eventually discard according to our convenience.

In an age increasingly preoccupied with self-image, achievement, and self-definition, we risk overlooking the deeper reality: the image of a loving, creative, faithful, and comforting God. Ours is also an age marked by growing anxiety. One of the most effective remedies for anxiety is gratitude: gratitude toward God, expressed also through thankfulness to others.

At its sharpest edge, gratitude rejects entitlement. It resists the temptation to say, "I earned this entirely on my own," or "I deserve this because of who I am." Gratitude reminds us that life itself is first a gift before it becomes an achievement.

This is a season of degrees, honors, and diplomas. These are worthy accomplishments, and they deserve recognition. Yet every achievement requires depth beneath the surface. No degree, salary, title, or distinction is ultimately as valuable as a heart that carries and spreads **gratitude**.

Gratitude overcomes bitterness by helping us remember God's faithfulness even in disappointment, failure, delay, and loss. It keeps before us the power of the Cross, reminding us that sacrifice and love are greater than comfort and convenience. And when life brings suffering, displacement, loss of lives and occupation of lands, or blocked national horizons, gratitude transforms suffering into trust. It frees us from becoming

prisoners of circumstances and enables us to place our confidence in the God who remains faithful in every season. It becomes the strength to begin again, the courage to continue the journey, learn, unlearn, and relearn, and the source of a deeper quality of life from the inside out.

May gratitude be one of the defining marks of your life, my dear friends, shaping your character, deepening your faith, enriching your relationships, and guiding your journey in the years ahead.

And, with gratitude and anticipation, we look forward to continuing the celebration next Friday.

*Rev. Paul Haidostian, Ph.D.
President*