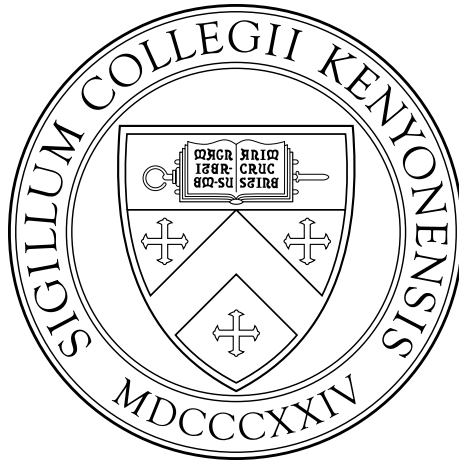


# Kenyon College



## Baccalaureate Service

Samuel Mather Lawn  
One Thirty O'clock, May Twentieth  
Two Thousand Sixteen

## **The Processional\***

The Scioto Brass Ensemble

## **The Invocation\***

Elizabeth B. Keeney

*Director, Board of Spiritual and Religious Life, Kenyon College*

## **Welcome**

Sean M. Decatur

*President*

## **Texts from a Kenyon Education**

### **Fine Arts Division**

A passage from *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, by Julia Kristeva (1941-), translated by Leon S. Roudiez

Read by Marissa Lee Morte, Class of 2016, for the Department of Art History

When the starry sky, a vista of open seas, or a stained-glass window shedding purple beams fascinate me, there is a cluster of meaning, of colors, of words, of caresses, there are light touches, scents, sighs, cadences that arise, shroud me, carry me away, and sweep me beyond the things that I see, hear, or think. The “sublime” object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory. It is such a memory, which, from stopping point to stopping point, remembrance to remembrance, love to love, transfers that object to the refulgent point of the dazzlement in which I stray in order to be.

### **Humanities Division**

A passage from “The Street Window,” by Franz Kafka (1883-1924), translated by Willa and Edwin Muir

Read by Henri Kendall Gendreau, Class of 2016, for the Department of English

Whoever leads a solitary life and yet now and then wants to attach himself somewhere, whoever, according to changes in the time of day, the weather, the state of his business, and the like, suddenly wishes to see any arm at all to which he might cling—he will not be able to manage for long without a window looking on to the street. And if he is in the mood of not desiring anything and only goes to his window sill a tired man, with eyes turning from his public to heaven and back again, not wanting to look out and having thrown his head up a little, even then the horses below will draw him down into their train of wagons and tumult, and so at last into the human harmony.

\*Audience standing

## Natural Sciences Division

A passage from “On Electricity,” an 1897 address by Nikola Tesla (1856-1943) on the opening of the Niagara Falls Power Plant in Buffalo, New York

Read by Margaret Faye Huff, Class of 2016, for the Department of Physics

Weekly, if not daily, we learn through the journals of a new advance into some unexplored region, where at every step success beckons friendly, and leads the toiler on to hard and harder tasks. . . . With ideas it is like with dizzy heights you climb: At first they cause you discomfort, and you are anxious to get down, distrustful of your own powers; but soon the remoteness of the turmoil of life and the inspiring influence of the altitude calm your blood; your step gets firm and sure and you begin to look—for dizzier heights.

## Social Sciences Division

A passage from *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, by Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton

Read by Laura Anne Langner, Class of 2016, for the Department of Sociology

We have never before faced a situation that called our deepest assumptions so radically into question. Our problems today are not just political. They are moral and have to do with the meaning of life. We have assumed that as long as economic growth continued, we could leave all else to the private sphere. Now that economic growth is faltering and the moral ecology on which we have tacitly depended is in disarray we are beginning to understand that our common life requires more than exclusive concern for material accumulation. . . . Perhaps work that is intrinsically rewarding is better for human beings than work that is only extrinsically rewarding. Perhaps enduring commitment to those we love and civic friendship toward our fellow citizens are preferable to restless competition and anxious self-defense. Perhaps common worship, in which we express our gratitude and wonder in the face of mystery of being itself, is the most important thing of all. If so, we will have to change our lives and begin to remember what we have been happier to forget. We will need to remember that we did not create ourselves, that we owe what we are to the communities that formed us, and to what Paul Tillich called “the structure of grace in history” that made such communities possible; we will need to see the story of our life on this earth not as an unbroken success but as a history of suffering as well as joy. We will need to remember the millions of suffering people in the world today and the millions whose suffering in the past made our present affluence possible . . . such a vision is neither conservative or liberal in terms of the truncated spectrum of present American political discourse. It does not seek to return to the harmony of a “traditional” society, though it is open to learning from the wisdom of such societies. It does not reject modern criticism of all traditions, but it insists in turn on the criticism of criticism, that human life is lived in the balance between faith and doubt.

## Texts from Our Religious Traditions

### Buddhist Tradition

A passage from “On Impermanence,” by Larry Carlson

Read by Phoebe Kingsford Lewis, Class of 2016

There is no farewell, only fare forward. Everything changes, manifests as something new, gains by it and gifts it to what follows. The full realization comes that everything is connected, everything is One. Everything changes, nothing perishes. Perhaps no one captured the essence of this better than Percy Bysshe Shelley in his poem entitled “Cloud”:

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,  
And the nursling of the Sky;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;  
I change, but I cannot die.  
For after the rain when with never a stain  
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams  
Build up the blue dome of air,  
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,  
I arise and unbuild it again.

### Christian Tradition

“In Silence,” from *The Strange Islands: Poems*, by Thomas Merton (1915-68)

Read by Sarah Kathleen Ash, Class of 2016

Be still.  
Listen to the stones of the wall.  
Be silent, they try  
to speak your

name.  
Listen  
to the living walls.

Who are you?  
Who  
are you? Whose  
silence are you?

Who (be quiet)  
are you (as these stones  
are quiet). Do not  
think of what you are  
still less of  
what you may one day be.

Rather  
be what you are (but who?)  
be the unthinkable one  
you do not know.

O be still, while  
you are still alive,  
and all things live around you

speaking (I do not hear)  
to your own being,  
speaking by the unknown  
that is in you and in themselves.

“I will try, like them  
to be my own silence:  
and this is difficult. The whole  
world is secretly on fire. The stones  
burn, even the stones they burn me.  
How can a man be still or  
listen to all things burning?  
How can he dare to sit with them  
when all their silence is on fire?”

### **Hindu Tradition**

A passage from *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Seventh Canto, by Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977)  
Read by Manjul Bhusal Sharma, Class of 2016

Although one may consider the reflection of the sun from a mirror to be false, it has its factual existence. Accordingly, to prove by speculative knowledge that there is no reality would be extremely difficult.

The impersonalists try to prove that the varieties in the vision of the empiric philosopher are false. The impersonalist philosophy generally cites the acceptance of a rope to be a snake as an example of this fact. According to this example, the varieties within our vision are false, just as a rope seen to be a snake is false. The Vaisnavas say, however, that although the idea that the rope is a snake is false, the snake is not false; one has experience of a snake in reality, and therefore he knows that although the representation of the rope as a snake is false or illusory, there is a snake in reality. Similarly, this world, which is full of varieties, is not false; it is a reflection of the reality in the Vaikuntha world, the spiritual world. The reflection of the sun from a mirror is nothing but light within darkness. Thus although it is not exactly sunlight, without the sunlight, the reflection would be impossible. Similarly, the varieties of this world would be impossible unless there were a real prototype in the spiritual world. The Mayavadi philosopher cannot understand this, but a real philosopher must be convinced that light is not possible at all without a background of sunlight. Thus the jugglery of words used by the Mayavadi philosopher to prove that this material world is false may amaze inexperienced

children, but a human being with full knowledge knows perfectly well that there cannot be any existence without God (Krishna).

### **Islamic Tradition**

A passage from *The Forty Rules of Love: A Novel of Rumi*, by Elif Shafak (1971-)  
Read by Houda El Joundi, Class of 2016

You can study God through everything and everyone in the universe, because God is not confined in a mosque, synagogue, or church. But if you are still in need of knowing where exactly His abode is, there is only one place to look for him: in the heart of a true lover.

It's easy to love a perfect God, unblemished and infallible that He is. What is far more difficult is to love fellow human beings with all their imperfections and defects. Remember, one can only know what one is capable of loving. There is no wisdom without love. Unless we learn to love God's creation, we can neither truly love nor truly know God.

A life without love is of no account. Don't ask yourself what kind of love you should seek, spiritual or material, divine or mundane, Eastern or Western. Divisions only lead to more divisions. Love has no labels, no definitions. It is what it is, pure and simple. Love is the water of life. And a lover is a soul of fire! The universe turns differently when fire loves water.

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi wrote: I profess the religion of love; wherever its caravan turns along the way, that is the belief, the faith I keep.

### **Jewish Tradition**

Selections from two Jewish texts, the Talmud and Pirkei Avot  
Read by Jacob Griffith-Rosenberger, Class of 2016

Another time a non-Jew came before Shammai and said, “I will convert if you can teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot.” Shammai pushed the non-Jew aside with the ruler that was in his hand. The non-Jew came before Hillel and Hillel converted him saying, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor, that is the entire Torah, the rest is just commentary, now go and study.” (Shabbat 31a)

Hillel says: “Do not separate yourself from the congregation. Do not believe in yourself until the day of your death. Do not judge your fellow until you come to his place. Do not say something that cannot be heard, for in the end it will be heard. Do not say, ‘When I will be available I will study,’ lest you never become available.” (Pirkei Avot 2:4)

And once Rabbi Tarfon and the Elders were reclining in the attic of the House of Nitzah in Lod [and] this question was asked in front of them: Is study greater or action greater?

Rabbi Tarfon answered and said, “Action is greater.”

Rabbi Akiva answered and said, “Study is greater.”

They all answered and said, “Study is greater, since study brings about action.” (Kiddushin 40b)

[Rabbi Tarfon] used to say: “It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.” (Pirkei Avot 2:16)

[Rabbi Hillel] used to say: “If I am not for me, who will be for me? And when I am for myself alone, what am I? And if not now, then when?” (Pirkei Avot 1:14)

## **Shinto Tradition**

A passage from *Kafka on the Shore*, by Haruki Murakami (1949-), translated by Philip Gabriel

Read by Nina Maria Okita Whittaker, Class of 2016

A dark, omnipresent pool of water.

It was probably always there, hidden away somewhere. But when the time comes it silently rushes out, chilling every cell in your body . . .

The world is a huge space, but the space that will take you in—and it doesn't have to be very big—is nowhere to be found. You seek a voice, but what do you get? Silence. You look for silence, but guess what? All you hear over and over and over is the voice of this omen. And sometimes this prophetic voice pushes a secret switch hidden deep inside your brain.

Your heart is like a great river after a long spell of rain, full to the banks. All signposts that once stood on the ground are gone, inundated and carried away by that rush of water. And still the rain beats down on the surface of the river. Every time you see a flood like that on the news you tell yourself: That's it. That's my heart.

## **Anthem**

“Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round”

Melody: Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625)

Words: John White Chadwick (1840-1904), upon his graduation from Harvard Divinity School in 1864

Sung by Benjamin R. Locke

*Professor of Music*

## **The Baccalaureate Address**

“Be Kind”

Michael Durham

*Substance Abuse Educator and Counselor*

## **Benediction\***

Marc W. Bragin

*Director, Kenyon College Hillel*

## **The Recessional\***

The Scioto Brass Ensemble