

Invocation Remarks

*To the July 21, 2006 Graduating Class of the Los Angeles Police
Department Police Academy*

by **Michael Josephson**

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Congratulations! You and your family have every reason to be proud of your decision to join a profession dedicated to serving others.

I'm sure you know that your life as a Los Angeles Police Officer will be an intense and challenging experience that will continually test your training, your intelligence and integrity.

It will also test the power of your will to overcome continuous temptations to give in to cynicism or frustration or, worse, to demean or trivialize your mission by thinking of what you do as merely a way to earn a living.

Though you are entering the profession at a time when there is great emphasis on benefits, entitlements and compressed work schedules, you will short change yourself tragically if you think of policing simply as a job.

The American poet Henry Van Dyke said, *"There is a life that is worth living - the honest life, the useful life, the unselfish life, cleansed by devotion to an ideal. There is a battle worth fighting now as it was worth fighting then, and that is the battle for justice and equality."*

That is the life you are choosing and I hope you will find time throughout your career to celebrate and appreciate the gift of worthy work.

Though you are likely to face rough spots when you wonder whether it's worth it, your doubts will dissolve if you find it gratifying knowing that when you represent your department, your family and yourself with pride and perform your duty with zeal that you will make people's lives better every single day by enhancing the quality of life in your community and

creating an environment where people feel safe, secure and well-protected.

If you maintain a positive attitude about the vital importance of your role in society and your ability to make a real, meaningful and enduring difference in the lives of others you will have one the most gratifying careers anyone could have.

Harold Kushner tells us that "Our souls are not hungry for fame, comfort, wealth or power. Our souls are hungry for meaning, for the sense that we have figured out how to live so that our lives matter, so that the world will be at least a little bit different for our having passed through it."

If you approach policing as a dedicated professional, you will have endless opportunities for personal growth. You will make deep and lasting friendships and experience the pleasure that comes from working with a team of men and women with shared values and objectives.

Most of all, you will earn the admiration and gratitude of fair-minded people, the pride of family and friends and the supreme satisfaction of knowing you are leading a worthy and honorable life that really matters.

I would like to close by sharing with you a poem about what matters.

*Ready or not, some day it will all come to an end.
There will be no more sunrises, no minutes, hours or days.
All the things you collected, whether treasured or forgotten will
pass to someone else.
Your wealth, fame and temporal power will shrivel to irrelevance.*

It will not matter what you owned or what you were owed.

Your grudges, resentments, frustrations and jealousies will finally disappear.

So too, your hopes, ambitions, plans and to do lists will expire.

The wins and losses that once seemed so important will fade away.

It won't matter where you came from or what side of the tracks you lived on at the end.

It won't matter whether you were beautiful or brilliant.

Even your gender and skin color will be irrelevant.

So what will matter? How will the value of your days be measured?

What will matter is not what you bought but what you built, not what you got but what you gave.

What will matter is not your success but your significance.

What will matter is not what you learned but what you taught.

What will matter is every act of integrity, compassion, courage, or sacrifice that enriched, empowered or encouraged others to emulate your example.

What will matter is not your competence but your character.

What will matter is not how many people you knew, but how many will feel a lasting loss when your gone.

What will matter is not your memories, but the memories that live in those who loved you.

What will matter is how long you will be remembered, by whom and for what.

Living a life that matters doesn't happen by accident.

It's not a matter of circumstance but of choice.

Choose to live a life that matters.



Michael Josephson is the founder and president of the Josephson Institute, which he named for his parents after retiring from successful careers in business, law and education. He serves without salary and donates all fees and honoraria from his programs to the Institute, which is overseen by an independent, volunteer board of governors.

Every day, listeners can catch his Gabriel Award-winning radio commentaries on CBS's KNX-1070 in southern California, as well as on stations across the country and American Forces worldwide.

From confidential consultations to keynote addresses and workshops, he has assisted elected officials, editors, jurists, military and police command officers and executives at the nation's largest corporations, nonprofit organizations and government agencies.

Through the Institute, Mr. Josephson founded CHARACTER COUNTS!, the nation's leading character education system. It now reaches five million youngsters through the CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition, a partnership of schools and youth-serving organizations. Two Presidents, the Congress, most states and countless municipalities have endorsed the Coalition's approach and declared the third week in October "National CHARACTER COUNTS! Week." Mr. Josephson also launched the Pursuing Victory With Honor sportsmanship campaign, endorsed by virtually all American amateur athletic organizations. Other projects include the Honor Above All integrity promotion campaign and the nationwide Foundations for Life student essay and creative expression contest.

All Institute programs and projects are nonpartisan and non sectarian, promoting a common language of core values called the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship.

Mr. Josephson received the America's Award in 1995 from President Ronald Reagan. In 2000, he was named to the Bush-Cheney Transition Advisory Committee as a nonpartisan character education expert. Mr. Josephson's accomplishments have not gone unnoticed by the nation's leading news media, which frequently quote and profile him and feature his articles. His most recent books are *The Best is Yet to Come* (2002) and *You Don't Have to Be Sick to Get Better!* (2001) and he is also coauthor of *Parenting to Build Character in Your Teen* (2001).

The nonprofit **Joseph & Edna Josephson Institute of Ethics** helps people make principled decisions and live with greater integrity. Based in Los Angeles and active nationally, the Institute works with corporations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations and schools, providing such services as confidential consultations, ethics, audits, keynote addresses, seminars and customized trainings.