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Good morning, and welcome.

I am honored to address you all today in what I consider the most obvious intersection of religion and academics on campus: Memorial Church. Nestled in the center of Main Quad, the academic hub of Stanford, Memorial Church is a rather obvious reminder that spirituality has a significant place in a student's life. And trust me, it's not always this obvious.

I am a junior majoring in Economics, a subject often referred to as "the dismal science." So where exactly can we find the divine in a "dismal science"? Economics tries to explain everything in a way both mathematical and practical. The only evidence I have seen of God in Economics is the mysterious "invisible hand" that somehow always manages to make supply equal to demand. I never expected to find meaning in my specific major, or any other major for that matter. I did, however, expect to find meaning in the pursuit of my education. In Hindu philosophy, the greatest purpose is to acquire knowledge. As Stanford students, we learn to question everything ... including questioning faith.

No matter how complex our classroom material, religion is no doubt even more complicated. Students accept that a fundamental respect for peoples and religions around the world is imperative for long term cooperation and peace. To help navigate through some religious questions, I joined an interfaith group that met once a week. As one of the Hindu students, I was given the unique opportunity to share with my fellow classmates aspects of my culture and rich religious traditions.

All of us there were drawn to interfaith dialogue because now more than ever before we need people who intelligently and compassionately wish to engage with the world. We acknowledge that a multifaith approach provides the most thorough understanding of our complex world. Sitting around a table (in this very building, in fact), sharing experiences and learning about different religions, we were letting spirituality exist in the very environment in which we live and study.

I remember fondly a day last year when the Hindu Students Council organized Holi, a festival celebrating the arrival of spring and the triumph of good over evil. Over a hundred students were dancing to Hindi music and throwing colored powder at each other. I couldn't help but look around at the participants – over half the students were non-South Asian, non-Hindu. It did not matter that they weren't Hindu. We were all coming together to celebrate a universal, beautiful concept on a beautiful day. And alluding again to Main Quad, that heartbeat of this university, I encourage everyone to take in the view and imagine attending classes in such a beautiful environment. If that's not a spiritual experience, I don't know what is.

Enjoy your visit. Thank you.