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Speech - Law School 2023 Commencement Ceremony

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2023 Law School Graduation

Thursday, May 25, 2023

3 p.m.

New Jersey Performing Arts Center

Newark, New Jersey

Thank you.

Greetings, and congratulations to the Seton Hall Law Class of 2023!

This is a day you and your loved ones have long imagined: your graduation day. Earning a degree from Seton Hall Law is an incredible accomplishment. You should be very proud to have reached this milestone.

Here, you received a top-tier legal education. In your clinics, your classrooms, the books you read, and the people you met. But you learned much more than theories. You lived the law through all manner of hands-on, practice-based experiences — both in the Law School and the wider legal community.

I know it did not come without great sacrifices. First and foremost, the job of achieving a Seton Hall legal education was made much more difficult by COVID.

Staying healthy and safe added to the responsibilities of learning the law. But you responded with uncommon determination, teamwork, and fortitude. Nothing was going to stop you from realizing your Law School dreams. Not even a once-in-a-century pandemic.

There were other challenges as well:

- long study sessions mastering legal principles;
- moments of doubt, when you questioned if law school was the right choice;
- and days when you wondered how everything was going to get done, and whether it would be any good once it was finished.

Along the way, there were also astounding highs — when you felt you were in exactly the right place at exactly the right time. You learned how to be adaptable. And not just survive, but reach a little further beyond your grasp, and thrive in the face of adversity.

Today, victory is yours. As you celebrate your achievements, please remember the people who helped you.

Remember the stellar Law School faculty, many of whom are now trusted mentors. Parents and loved ones who played no small part in your success. And lifelong friends who stood behind each of you.

Your diploma is as much theirs as it is yours. You'll never be able to pay back what you owe them — *but you can pay it forward.*

Soon, you will enter a position of privilege in this country. Your chosen career is evolving along with nearly every aspect of life in America. A career in the legal community means something very different today than it did 15, 10, or even five years ago.

Thankfully, you have received a very specific type of legal education. An education that is dedicated to promoting the common good.

By now you understand Seton Hall lawyers are bound by a mission to serve. To use their position of privilege to advance justice throughout society. To personify the highest calling of their profession.

(It's well known and often said.... "The higher the calling, the greater courage it takes to fulfill that calling with integrity, honor, and compassion.")

As more of our fellow citizens consider the courts as an option of first resort, we will need attorneys with wisdom and virtue.

Wisdom of course is "knowing what to do" and virtue is having the "will and courage to do it." We know you will demonstrate both in the choices you make.

I would like to close with a quote by the author Steven Keeva, which I hope will be meaningful to you on this special day. He said:

"Law is one of the great healing professions. While medicine heals the body and the clergy heal the soul, the law heals societal rifts."

Class of 2023, today marks your induction into this great healing profession.

You are charged with using your skills to heal the world through acts both great and small. I hope all of you will join a cause that means something important to you and to humanity.

Good luck. Travel safely. And come back home when you can.

May God bless you throughout your lives and in everything you do.

Congratulations!