

5-24-2019

2019 Commencement Remarks by the President

Philip L. Boroughs S.J.
College of the Holy Cross

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Recommended Citation

Boroughs, Philip L. S.J., "2019 Commencement Remarks by the President" (2019). *President's Remarks*. 1.
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COLLEGE OF THE Holy Cross

CELEBRATING 175 YEARS

Presidential Remarks



Friday, May 24, 2019

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J., president of the College

Graduates, yesterday, at our Baccalaureate Mass, we remembered in prayer two of your classmates who are not here today, but are definitely with us in spirit: Henry Carr and Josh Pellerin. Members of the Carr and Pellerin families have joined us today for this commencement celebration and I would to ask them to stand as I introduce them so that we can acknowledge them: Please welcome Henry Carr's parents, Kim and Bob and his siblings Sam and Francesca; and Josh Pellerin's Mom, Kelly, and his siblings Brendan and Kiera.

I am pleased to announce that the members of the class of 2019 have designated their class gift to name a one-year Holy Cross fund scholarship in memory of Henry and Josh. My thanks to all who have contributed so far.

Members of the Class of 2019, four years ago when I formally welcomed you to the campus at your New Student Convocation, I commented that during their college years at the University of Paris, roommates St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Francis Xavier and St. Peter Favre, with several others, founded the Society of Jesus. 450 years after their collegiate experience, their legacy continues to have global impact, and through the mission of the College of the Holy Cross has directly touched each of us. I then ended my remarks that afternoon by saying:

As I look at you, the Holy Cross class of 2019, I wonder what experiences you will share, what ideas will capture your minds, what deep desires will move your hearts, what human needs will inspire your generosity, and what life-transforming projects you will devise to serve the common good? These undergraduate years have the power to set the direction for your entire life.

Now, 4 years later, I hope that your years on Mount St. James have been transformative. While I suspect that for many of you it is still too early to discern with precision your life's direction, I hope you are taking the next steps in your life's journey with confidence. Clearly the intellectual life you pursued here has given you a wide range of new questions and interests which are now leading many of you to graduate studies.

For those of you about to enter the workforce, hopefully the education you have received, the values we have emphasized and the profession you are choosing will engage some of the real needs facing the human family and will do so in ways which can reach across the differences which currently divide our country.

And as people of Faith and responsible citizens, the commitment to service which was such an important part of your Holy Cross experience is motivating many of you to find new ways of responding to our world's needs through the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Teach for America, the Peace Corps and City Year.

For all the members of the Class of 2019, I hope that your service here in Worcester, alternate Spring Breaks, immersion trips, study abroad, international and domestic cross-cultural experiences, as well as the protests and social activism you have participated in, have stirred in you a life-long desire to learn more about the lives and needs of others, different cultures and identities, political and social realities, and religious differences and similarities. If the needs of our campus, country and world have touched your lives, then we can expect that in the years ahead you will become increasingly sensitive, understanding and open to those who face overwhelming challenges, who see the world with a distinctive lens or are differently gifted, and who need the support and care of society to thrive. May your work to change our world be hope-filled, collaborative and just.

Finally, in all the experiences where you have had to learn truths the hard way, have challenged and been challenged, have struggled, failed and rebounded, or have had to wait as the slow process of inspiration and insight unfolded, I hope you have been graced with courage, patience, humility, and compassion, characteristics so badly needed in contemporary society. I hope, too, that the College's commitment to spiritual growth, religious development, and our human need for greater silence, prayer and thoughtful decision-making, will continue to mark your lives.

For those of you still discerning your next steps, be open to new experiences and don't be afraid to take some risks. Your first job doesn't have to be your life's career, but can simply be your best attempt to get your foot in a door and build experiences and a resume on which to base further decisions. I don't know any successful professionals, myself included, who haven't had to sort through periods of uncertainty more than once in our careers. These experiences, too, have a lot to teach us about creativity and resiliency.

Graduates, having just received your diplomas, your four years as students at the College now have come to a close. I want you to know that all of us who have committed ourselves to your education and formation have come to see ourselves and our world with new insight because of what you have given to us. We are proud of your accomplishments, in awe of your talent and generosity, and graced in your friendship.

To your parents and families, and to our alums and donors who have made this educational experience possible for you, we will be forever grateful. And, as you now enter the renowned community of alumni who so enthusiastically support the College and each other, we look forward to sharing with you the work of promoting and advancing this educational community in the years ahead.

Finally, for all who have prepared this ceremony, and for our speakers and honorary degree recipients whom we are about to recognize, we are truly blessed. Thank you.

Now, it is my pleasure to introduce our 2019 Valedictorian, Isabel Block. From Georgetown, Massachusetts, Isabel is Mathematics and Chinese double major, a member of the Pi Mu Epsilon Mathematics Honor Society, the Alpha Sigma Nu Jesuit Honor Society and Phi Beta Kappa.

Isabel is a member and co-chair of The Delilahs, our all female a cappella club, a member of the Admissions Outreach Program, the Mathematics and Computer Science Advisory Committee, co-chair of the Modern Languages Student Advisory Committee, and for the past three years she has served as the Jewish representative at our Multifaith Community Prayer which opens each spring semester.

Following graduation, Isabel plans to pursue a career as an actuary and has accepted a full-time position in the Liberty Mutual Insurance Actuarial Development Program. Her longer range plans include visiting China and incorporating her Chinese language skills into her career, as well as continuing to be an advocate for the Jewish community and other marginalized groups. Please welcome: Isabel Block, our 2019 Valedictorian.