

# Commencement Remarks Spring 2007

Congratulations, and now officially welcome, all 363 of you, to the Bellarmine University Alumni Association, which at this point in the University's history is not only a national but an international organization -- composed of over 16,000 Bellarmine men and women.

As you know, Bellarmine has launched a big, bold and ambitious vision for its improvement and growth over the next 15 years, Vision 2020 – and the bright, beautiful and powerful Bellarmine University alumni, now including all of you, as well as Wendell Berry, Archbishop Kelly and always Billy Bradford – will become a major factor in turning our vision into our reality.

My two distinguished predecessors, Msgr. Alfred Horrigan and Dr. Gene Petrik, would very much have liked having as abundant a University resource as an alumni organization of this size, strength, diversity and range. And I have both leaders and the faculty and staff they led and the alumni they produced very much in mind on a day like today and am profoundly grateful to them all for helping to build the foundation for the University we are today and will be in the future.

We now have a large number of older alums who are including us most generously in their estate plans; we have many highly successful alumni and alumnae like Joe Clayton and Angela Mason, now sharing with Bellarmine so much of their hard-earned wealth; and now we have our young alums – including you -- joining ranks, linking arms, and helping us all march with great confidence and pride into our great individual and institutional future. So welcome indeed, Class of 2007, to the Bellarmine University Alumni Association!

As anyone who has attended or worked at an educational institution knows – each class year, and thus each graduating class has its own unique culture, character, personality, and style. The same can be said of you -- but with the highest praise, “summa cum laude.”

As the faculty, staff and I have observed your Class of 2007 over your time here, you have revealed to us and to the world a number of very impressive things about yourselves. I will mention a few of them.

First of all, you are an exceptionally bright, talented and intellectually and morally engaged class. The level of excellence and the range of your academic achievement have been most extraordinary, for example:

- From Senior Music major Bart Mattingly’s achievement as winner of the Kentucky Music Educators’ Association Collegiate Composition Competition -- for his original five-part choral composition on the text O Magnum Mysterium.
- To the 15 Senior Biology majors being accepted into medical, dental, pharmacy and other graduate programs.
- To Jason Smith’s distinguished achievement in his advanced study of the Japanese language, an achievement that also led to his employment with a large, successful Japanese firm.
- To Janelle Oliver’s award for the non-fiction Metroversity Writing Contest, after winning the poetry prize the previous year.
- To many other equally distinguished achievements by so many of you.

You also are an exceptionally generous, service-oriented class, generating with others over 21,000 hours of service in projects ranging from Relay for Life and Bellarmine Volunteer Days to service trips to Guatemala, Belize, Appalachia, Louisiana, and Mexico.

You also are a class that literally has Bellarmine in your blood, heart and soul – in that there is an historic number of Bellarmine legacy students among you. For example, one of our Salutatorians, Sarah Todd's parents went here and her sister, Trish, our new SGA President is here. My legendary Administrative Assistant Lucy Burns and her husband Ray are the parents of four children, two of whom are at Bellarmine now, and one of whom, Ray, is our Class Valedictorian -- and will be spending a year in Micronesia with WorldTeach before entering graduate school at Cornell University.

Former Board of Overseers' Chair and alumnus Don Gossman's daughter, Amy Gossman Dickinson, receives her MAT today.

The great Bellarmine Women's Council leader, Peggy Beuchler, is the mother-in-law of Kathleen Beuchler who receives her degree in Art today.

And these are but a few examples of the record number of Bellarmine legacies among you who graduate today. We celebrate each one of you and your Bellarmine families.

And last but not least, yours is a class of great passion, commitment and dedication to learning --across lifetimes and under all sorts of challenging conditions.

Paula Warden, for example, used her extended hospital experience occasioned by a serious illness to inspire the compelling art work she exhibited this year in the McGrath Art Gallery.

In this regard, many of us think as well of our wonderful friend and colleague, Stewart Alexander, who passed away this past November at the age of 86 – after completing his Master of Arts degree in the great program we share with the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary – in Spirituality. (I also take this moment to acknowledge and thank two of our faculty colleagues from the

Seminary – Dr. Kathryn Johnson and Dr. Dianne Reistroffer for being with us today.)

Your class has inspired us in so many ways as you are a very special and unique class, the kind of class that comes together in a university only a few times in the institution's history. But the particular characteristics I have mentioned, and others, make yours a most memorable and successful class because of . . . .

- Your academic excellence and enormous competitive achievements.
- Your spirit of hospitality, generosity and service across local, regional, national and international arenas.
- Your love for Bellarmine, and your engagement in creating and advancing the Bellarmine spirit through Bellarmine legacies and through many, many other ways.
- Your passion, commitment and dedication to lifelong learning in the university and your related respect, affection and love -- not only for one another but for those of us who teach and support teaching here as well, inspire us and fill us with a great sense of satisfaction, pride, joy, and deep gratitude. Thank you so much for that great gift.

When I reflect on your class, the Bellarmine University Class of 2007, it occurs to me that very quickly, very thoroughly, and very deeply you picked up on who we are at Bellarmine, what Bellarmine is all about – being an authentic, spirited community, a learning community focused on helping you learn -- not only how to go about making a meaningful living, but also becoming skilled and experienced at continually creating and nurturing a life that is rich with real meaning, value, efficacy and love.

As I close, therefore, and give you my presidential charge to direct and guide your lives going forward, I note with much pleasure and confidence that over just

your few intense years with us, you truly and fully “get it” as far as understanding and living what Bellarmine is all about, who we are, what we stand for, what we encourage in you.

That means that you and Bellarmine have been successful not only in helping you earn a degree and receive a diploma – but in the process you have been successful in earning a real Bellarmine education as well!

My charge to you, therefore, is very clear and simple, Class of 2007 – Keep up the good work, continue to live what you have so impressively learned here, and of course continue to live, learn, and love this way throughout your lives.

Speaking personally and also for the trustees, overseers, faculty, staff and alumni of Bellarmine University, I wish you congratulations, farewell, welcome, gratitude, love and Godspeed.

Thank you.

Dr. Joseph J. McGowan

President

May 12, 2007