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Associate Professor Jennifer Mason McAward Commencement Address

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Commencement

May 20, 2006 dawned gray and ominous in South Bend, and rain threatened all day long. Still, at 9:45 a.m., the class of 2007 strode from the north entrance of the Law School to the Basilica of the Sacred Heart for a hooding ceremony untouched by even a drop of rain. They gathered again, after the general commencement ceremony, for an outdoor diploma ceremony by the reflecting pool in front of the Hesburgh Library, again untouched by more than a few drops of rain. As the winds played havoc with their graduation robes and even shuffled the pages of the dean’s final charge to the class, they listened intently to Prof. Mason’s address to them, walked proudly across the stage to receive their diploma from the dean, then listened again as the dean shared with them her recollected thoughts on happiness in the lives of lawyers. For our graduates, for their families, and for the faculty who taught them, it was a day to remember.

— John H. Robinson
To Gather Together. To Entrust. To Send. These three things, I believe, are really what today’s commissioning ceremony is all about.

You gather together today as a community of scholars, who have spent the past three years in common pursuit of knowledge, wisdom, and truth. You gather as a community of friends, who have spent that time encouraging each other, praying together, serving together, and relaxing together. And today, you gather with your families, those people who have been your primary sources of love and support throughout your lives and your education.

By gathering together for today’s celebration, you reflect the truth that human beings flourish in community. Not one of you can thrive alone in the days to come. It is only by being in community with others that you can fully engage your hearts, your minds, and your souls.

By gathering together today, you also acknowledge the call of our chosen profession. As lawyers, you are called to be both community leaders and community servants. In a culture that often encourages greed and materialism, you must prize generosity and service, and dedicate your professional efforts to making your communities stronger, more vibrant, and more just.

So, you’ve gathered together as both a sign and symbol of the community you have been and will be. And in just a few minutes, you will be handed a diploma. In that one small gesture, in that one brief moment, you are being entrusted with great and profound power—the power to invoke and shape the law.

The law can be a tremendous force for good in this world. It can be used to promote human dignity and build up community. It can also be used to denigrate and divide. After today, the power of the law is in your hands, and we are entrusting it to you with the confidence that you will use it to serve the common good rather than selfish interest.

The common good requires that you promote and honor the dignity of every person with whom you come into contact. This is easy enough to do when you have a sympathetic client—and each of you should have sympathetic clients throughout your career. Whatever your chosen field in the law, I believe that each of you has a moral obligation to work pro bono on behalf of the poor and to speak on behalf of the voiceless. With great power comes great responsibility.

The common good also requires that you honor the dignity of those who are not your clients. Even unsympathetic opponents deserve justice and a measure of compassion. And because any particular case or deal can have ripple effects far beyond the parties, you must be conscious of the consequences of your decisions and actions. Let wisdom and the cause of justice be your guide.

So, we have gathered together to entrust you with great power. And at the end of today’s Commissioning Ceremony, we will send you. Not in the sense of sending you away from here, for you will always have a place here, just as Notre Dame will always have a place in your hearts. Rather, we are sending you forward to bring Notre Dame and its spirit to other people and other places that are in desperate need of your energy, your wisdom, and your compassion.

We, the faculty, are sending you forward, having given you our best efforts to share our knowledge with you. We are sending you forward with our gratitude for the many gifts you have shared with us. And we are sending you forward with our prayers, our blessing, and our confidence that, commissioned here today, you will do great things in the days and years to come.

Congratulations, good luck, and may God bless you.
2007 Commencement Awards

**ALI-ABA Scholarship and Leadership Award**
Brian P. Morrissey, Jr.
Manhasset, New York

**Edward F. Barrett Award, The Arthur A. May Award, Clinical Legal Education Association Outstanding Student Award**
Toni Mardirossian
Germantown, Maryland

**Edward F. Barrett Award**
James Michael Paulino
Rochester, New York

**Joseph Cirraolo Memorial Award, The A. Harold Weber Moot Court Award**
Adéle Hutton Auxier
Fort Langley, British Columbia, Canada

**The Farabaugh Prize**
Brian Ernest Foster
Buchanan, Michigan

**The Farabaugh Prize**
Matthew Michael Killen
Maumee, Ohio

**The Colonel William J. Hoynes Award**
Tara Michele Stuckey
Waterville, Ohio

**International Academy of Trial Lawyers Award, The A. Harold Weber Moot Court Award**
Stephen Heuron Robinson
Stamford, Connecticut

**International Academy of Trial Lawyers Award**
Patrick Albert Salvi II
Lake Forest, Illinois

**Jessup International Moot Court Award**
Andrew Paul Moosmann
Washington, Missouri

**Conrad Kellenberg Award**
Stephen Michael Duvernay
Chico, California

**William T. Kirby Award**
Adam Keith Butman
Atlanta, Georgia

**William T. Kirby Award**
Craig Michael Perrotta
Miller Place, New York

**Dean Konop Legal Aid Award**
Jessica Lynn Hensley
Saint Charles, Illinois

**The Jon E. Krupnick Award**
Angelo Salvatore Gambino
Buffalo, New York

**The Jon E. Krupnick Award**
Kevin Frawley Moot
Park Ridge, Illinois

**David T. Link Award**
Kristine Schmidt
Northbrook, Illinois

**The Judge Joseph E. Mahoney Award, The A. Harold Weber Moot Court Award**
Heather Ann Cameron
Woodbridge, Virginia

**Captain William O. McLean Law School Community Citizenship Award**
Jon Douglas Schoenwetter
Waterloo, Wisconsin

**National Association of Women Lawyers Award**
Jeanine Marie Valles
San Dimas, California

**Dean Joseph O’Meara Award**
Glenn David Mathues
Aiken, South Carolina

**The A. Harold Weber Moot Court Award**
Charles Richard Hedman, II
Mishawaka, Indiana

**The A. Harold Weber Moot Court Award**
Katherine Davis Spitz
Sussex, Wisconsin

**The A. Harold Weber Writing Award**
Jennifer Lynne Morris