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Associate Professor Matthew J. Barrett '82, '85 J.D., Diploma Ceremony Address

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Graduation Address

BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF LAW MATTHEW J. BARRETT '82, '85 J.D.
RECIPIENT OF THE 2001 LAW SCHOOL DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

As we sang at the Hooding Ceremony this morning: "This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad!"

I have been asked to follow three presidents. I've also been asked to speak this *without PowerPoint*. I should sit down right now. I will keep talking, however, in large part because I remember my own Notre Dame Law School graduation. The speaker, the Foreign Minister of Italy, delivered a twenty-five minute speech — *in Italian*. I can do better.

By my count, the biggest questions over the last two days have been: Are you going to do the "tax cheer" again at graduation? Can we do the "tax cheer" on Sunday? Minutes ago we watched Air Force One fly overhead, so all is now clear for the tax cheer. I need your help: Tax is fun! Tax is great!! We love tax!!!

It's already been a long day full of speeches. To make sure that we all maintain a positive mental attitude for this ceremony, I also thought we could do a new cheer. So please substitute the word "speeches" for "tax." Speeches are fun! Speeches are great!! We love speeches!!!

I am privileged to accept this wonderful blessing and the opportunity to address both you and your families and friends on behalf of my colleagues. As I said at the Third-Year Dinner on Thursday night, this recognition for *teaching* really belongs to the entire Notre Dame Law School faculty — past, present and future.

On behalf of this class, I want to recognize Professor Rice, my neighbor in "Three South Central," who is being promoted to emeritus. If you think my office is out of control now, I shudder to think about next year when Professor Rice will not be next door to tell me to "clean up that mess."

Let me also mention two past winners of the Distinguished Teaching Award, who have close connections to today's graduates. Although there is no relation to me, one of the members of the graduating class, Peter Barrett, is the grandson of Professor Edward F. Barrett, who taught Trial Advocacy for more than 30 years and who was one of the first winners of the Distinguished Teaching Award. Another member of the class, Raymond Ripple, is the son of Judge Kenneth Ripple. Judge Ripple was selected by my graduating class, and by four other classes, as the recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award. We are blessed that he continues to teach one course each semester to our students.

In addition to thanking all my Law School teachers, some of whom are with us solely in spirit, I also want to recognize and acknowledge my colleagues who continue to teach me by their words and examples. I ask the entire faculty to stand, so that the graduating class and their families and friends can recognize your contributions to their legal educations.

Notre Dame Law School aspires to train and prepare a "different kind of lawyer." But what exactly does that mean? I want to share two thoughts about Notre Dame lawyers.

In the St. Thomas More Chapel in the Law School, you will see a beautiful stained-glass window dedicated to Father Michael Dillon McCafferty, class of 1973, and one of my law professors and mentors. The window features

various symbols taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin that highlight the law and learning — Mirror of Justice, Mother of Good Counsel, Queen of Peace and Seat of Wisdom. Yet, if this same woman, who the Catholic tradition reveres for her faith, courage and compassion, lived today, we might find her as a client of our own Legal Aid Clinic.

When I visualize a Notre Dame lawyer, I picture a lawyer that Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, might retain to represent her. In the person of Mary, we can see: an expectant, yet unwed, mother; a homeless parent, who has just given birth to her first child; a refugee, fleeing to Egypt with her husband and infant son; and a mother whose child has been unjustly accused of a capital offense. Whenever we represent those most in need of justice, we have the opportunity to see the face of Jesus.

No matter what our religious beliefs or our career path, our Creator calls all Notre Dame lawyers to seek justice and provide good counsel, to help resolve disputes equitably, and to try to prevent such disputes from even arising.

In a few minutes, you will become graduates of Notre Dame Law School. Many of you, however, have already begun to provide legal services to immigrants, the impoverished, the homeless and the accused, or to support individuals directly doing so. As I said Thursday night and repeat now for the benefit of your families and friends, what I remember most about this class collectively are its unique contributions to the Law School and our community. Through the leadership of this class, the "Day of Pay Campaign" last year obtained pledges from more than 200 students, raised more than \$20,000, and reinvigorated our loan forgiveness program. By founding, running and supporting the Dream Center at the Calvary Temple, you have left your mark on our local community.

On behalf of the faculty, I also want to give you one last assignment. Sometime in the next week, I want you to write "May 20, 2002" on the last page of your calendar. One year from now, and each May 20 thereafter, I urge you to ask yourself a few questions: Where is your life taking you? Have you grown closer to God since you left Notre Dame? How have you been a Notre Dame lawyer, or how have you supported other Notre Dame lawyers, in the last year? How will you respond to the call to be a Notre Dame lawyer in the future? Like most law school exams, there is no

one "right answer" to these questions. The important thing is that we never stop asking them of ourselves. If you want extra credit on this assignment, write a letter to one of your professors or send an e-mail that describes how you've been a Notre Dame lawyer and how you've helped build the Kingdom of God on earth.

We come from various faiths and we are going to work in different areas of law to use our unique God-given talents. Following Judge Ripple's example, I would like to quote a passage from Chapter 12 of the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, verses 4 and 5: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving but the same Lord is served."

Thank you, and God bless you.

