

## Commitment to Comradeship

- *ROTC Commissioning*  
- *June 11, 2011*  
- *Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.*

I hope you know that it is pure privilege for me as president of Seattle University to start the Commencement Weekend, with all of its events, by joining with you in this commissioning of the new officers from our ROTC Battalion. It is a privilege because with the run of events and all of the excitement and crowds, this event anchors the weekend in what any president would most hope for graduating students: commitment with courage and with eyes wide open. I feel as though in the other events of breakfast, Mass, banquet, commencement ceremonies, I give to the graduating students and their families. In experiencing this commissioning, I experience that the student cadets and their families give to me and to us, move us, change us, renew us in our own commitments.

The oaths, the pinning, and the salute of these officers always remind me of my own vows as a Jesuit. They have the same solemnity, the same trust, the same courage in facing the unknown future with commitment. Fifty years ago this September I started as a Jesuit and after two years of the equivalent of cadetship—which we called the novitiate—I pronounced vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience together with my fellow brand new Jesuits. The content of the vows, as the content of your oath, is important, that to which you pledge to be faithful. More important and more real is that I was promising by my vows to stand by, support, lean on, learn from, and love a group of companions in the Jesuits no matter what might come. So too you by your oath are most really committing yourself to stand by, protect, face danger with, learn from, lean on, and yes, even love your comrades. You will not choose them, they will be given to you. They will be the most real commitment in practice of the oath of this morning.

In a Memorial Day speech a friend told 500 of us that soldiers do not face danger and do what they do for family, freedom, and patriotism but that they can only do what they do for the sake of the guy next to them, the men and women of their platoon, for their comrades. The oath becomes real in the face of danger not through abstract or distant values, but right at hand, and concretely in the unbreakable bond with and commitment to comrades. That's the way the vows work in my Jesuit life and that's the way the oath of this morning will work in your lives as soldiers, as officers. You are committing yourself to comradeship whatever the consequences.

You, of this Major General Patrick H. Brady ROTC Battalion, can make this commitment to comradeship more easily because of the closeness and clear leadership of this battalion. You are, after all, being commissioned from our nation's #1 cadet command for quality on a wide range of measures. This recognition does not happen without all of you working together, pulling together, challenging and supporting one another. In short, it comes from comradeship. You have a solid foundation for your commitment to comradeship today.

This recognition as the best of 273 cadet commands also does not happen without great leadership. I salute and I thank in a special way Lieutenant Colonel Eric Farquharson, your Chair of the Department of Military Science, especially as he soon is reassigned, and I also salute and thank Master Sergeant Ron Credito, at the time of his retirement, and Major Tim Ohno for their extraordinary leadership of this battalion, their love of and pride in you, and their clear witness to what true comradeship means. You know what you are doing today by your oaths because you see what it is in their lives and leadership.

My gratitude as president of Seattle University to them, and my prayer for God's blessing on you in both your commissioning and your commencement this weekend. Thanks for the privilege of this morning, and of these years.