

Graduate Commencement 2017

- June 11, 2017
- Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.

Welcome to the final commencement ceremony of this 2016-17 academic year of Seattle University in its 125th year of life. After the Law Commencement in May, and the Undergraduate Commencement this morning, we arrive at last to your Graduate Commencement. It is appropriate that we reach the culmination of this year—this special 125th anniversary year—with the conferral of your Masters and Doctoral degrees because you best represent the fulfillment of our mission of education of the whole person, professional formation, and empowerment of leaders for a just and humane world. Our history is a long story of commitment to the Jesuit mission of education, a commitment based on the belief that this kind of education is most transformative of the world

When we thought of who we should honor on this special occasion and have speak to you, we knew who we wanted: an international humanitarian woman of the Christian faith who, through her actions, has saved and transformed the lives of children in the country of Burundi and has become an inspiration worldwide, Maggy Barankitse. We honored her several years ago with the Opus Prize and have never forgotten her and how she inspired and challenged us to be faithful to our mission. So we went and found and have brought her to you today from the other side of the world. You have the honor of receiving your graduate degrees in the same ceremony in which she receives an honorary doctorate from your university.

The world, for which you have been empowered by your education to be leaders in order to make it a more just and more humane world, comes close to you in Maggy. From however far away, and from however a different world she comes, it is the same world which needs transformation by the careers and lives you have been prepared for by your professional education. Your world needs transformation in business, in medical services, in criminal justice, in religion, in education, in psychological healing, in the sciences, engineering, and the environment, in public service and government, in the arts, in all that makes the world more just, more humane, more compassionate, more reconciled, more one, more the world created, intended, and loved by God. When we know any part of humanity more deeply and truly, we know the whole of humanity better and we know our own humanity more fully. We all must wake up to the fact that others very different from us hold dimensions and possibilities of our own humanity which we can discover as a gift in knowing them.

This afternoon you receive a good portion of that gift from Maggy Barankitse of Burundi. Let me welcome her, introduce her to you, and confer on her an honorary doctorate in your name, and then let her speak to you.