

Undergraduate Commencement 2018

- June 17, 2018
- Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.

Welcome to your Commencement, Class of 2018, and welcome to the parents, families, friends, professors, and mentors of these students graduating from Seattle University. Congratulations to the graduates and also congratulations to all who have supported them and walked with them these past years and are here to celebrate with them. It takes a tribe to graduate a college student.

As we move into this ceremony of honors, of commencement address and student speaker, of naming and celebrating each graduating student, let's take just a moment for memories.

What do you remember from these years: moving in and finding your new home here, new friends, some favorite professors, academic subjects of special interest you would not have imagined before, research, a couple of books that made a difference in how you think, clubs, activities, perhaps Quadstock and Dance Marathon and Redhawk wins, working out, all-nighters, service in the neighborhood, protests, vigils for persons who lost their lives, remembrances of heroes, internships and jobs, debates and demonstrations, early homesickness, later enjoyed independence, worship and prayer and retreats, music and art and choir, failures and learnings and successes and fun. What of all these possible memories stay with you? They are not just of the past. You do not leave them behind. They have shaped who you are today, the persons you have become as you graduate. Memories are sacred, because they are your story, your narrative, and your story is sacred. So on this day remember and be thankful for, and celebrate who you are.

What will I remember about you? More than any other graduating class you are the forefront of a great transition, a new era emerging, and you are that new era. I will remember your commitments and your passions: your strong stand to overcome racial discrimination, your new understanding and teaching of older generations about respect for and celebration of gender identities and expressions, your demand for equity and fairness, your advocacy for equal opportunity for all, your demand for disability services, your extraordinary commitment to and engagement in service, especially justice on behalf of the poor, the homeless, the immigrant, the imprisoned.

These are not just memories of mine, they change me, as your memories change you. I will not leave them behind. I believe from all I know of you that your greatest cause, the great concern and commitment of yours, is nothing less than to save the planet from destruction, from environmental and ecological degradation. It is your great cause because it is your future, and the future of your world. Hold onto this commitment and show others the way.

How appropriate, therefore, that the honorary degree recipient and commencement speaker today is the woman who perhaps more than any other person of our region—and widely within the nation—is known as a leader in this your great cause. Along with me please welcome Sally Jewell.