

Distinguished faculty, honored guests, proud families, and—most importantly—my fellow graduates:

It is my privilege, as the Student Bar Association President, to introduce our keynote speaker for this year's commencement: Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Michael Chagares. Today, we celebrate not just the conclusion of our studies, but the beginning of our journeys as lawyers, advocates, and citizens committed to service. In that spirit, it is truly fitting that we are joined by someone who exemplifies the very best of what it means to be a Seton Hall Law graduate.

Chief Judge Chagares is not only a proud alumnus of Seton Hall Law, but also the first federal court of appeals judge to graduate from our institution. He has dedicated his career to the pursuit of justice—not only from the bench, but through a lifetime of service. His commitment to the law is matched by his deep dedication to the broader legal community and to public service.

He has served on the Executive Judicial Conference of the United States, shaping national policy for the federal courts, and on the Advisory Committee on Appellate Rules, helping to ensure fairness and integrity in judicial procedures.

Chief Judge Chagares has also lectured abroad on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, sharing insights about the U.S. justice system and the rule of law with foreign judges, officials, and legal professionals—exemplifying his dedication to advancing justice and legal understanding around the world.

He demonstrates that service matters at every level. As Chair of the Working Group on Immigrant Representation in New Jersey, he works to expand access and improve the quality of legal representation for low-income immigrants. He holds leadership roles in his own community as

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President of the boards of his town's public library, West Bergen Mental Healthcare, and the Torpedoes Soccer Club. He has also served on the boards of organizations such as A Future With Hope, The New Jersey Lawyer Newspaper, and the Historical Society of the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey, and is a former Chair of the New Jersey State Bar Association's Federal Practice and Procedure Section.

Chief Judge Chagares's dedication to public service is perhaps most powerfully demonstrated by his work as a Hearing Officer for the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund. In the aftermath of a difficult time in our nation's history, he helped families navigate profound loss and ensured that justice and compassion guided the nation's response. His role required not only legal expertise, but also empathy, fairness, and a deep sense of civic responsibility.

What makes Judge Chagares especially meaningful to us today is not just his distinguished résumé, but his ongoing commitment to Seton Hall Law. As an adjunct professor for over three decades, he continues to teach and inspire in our own classrooms. He remains part of our community, guiding and supporting students as they find their own paths in the law. He understands that true greatness as a lawyer and leader is measured not solely by personal achievements, but by a steadfast dedication to uplifting others and guiding them toward success alongside him.

Judge Chagares reminds us that a legal education from Seton Hall is not just a foundation for a career—it is a call to serve, to lead, and to give back. His example shows us that our impact can extend far beyond our job titles, reaching into our communities, our profession, and the lives of those around us.

Please join me in welcoming our keynote speaker—a model of service, scholarship, and Seton Hall pride—Chief Judge Michael Chagares. Judge Chagares, we are honored to invite you to address our class.