

Class of 2025, I will be the first of many speakers today to congratulate you. But before I do that, I want to congratulate your friends and family members. Law school is challenging; it is metaphorically a team sport. These students could not have been as successful as they have been without the love and support of their teammates, whether those teammates are parents, spouses, partners, siblings, children, neighbors, friends or others.

I ask our graduates to join me in thanking their teams for the sustenance and love they have received over these past three or four years. *[applause]*

As many of you know, this was my first year at Seton Hall. Class of 2025, it has been a privilege and a joy to serve as your dean for the year we have been together. Even in my short time here, I have come to know many of you, and in the years ahead I hope you will remain involved in the law school as alumni so I can get to know all of you better.

Arriving last summer, I took stock of this law school's assets. I recognized right away that it is a great advantage to be one of only two law schools in New Jersey and, frankly, the best law school in New Jersey. We are deeply integrated into the legal community of the Garden State, represented across the federal and state judiciary, the state legislature, the law firms, government agencies, non-profit organizations and corporate general counsel offices.

And our reach extends beyond this State, as Seton Hall graduates increasingly plant a flag in New York City, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and across the country.

This wide-ranging Seton Hall network represents another asset: a passionately loyal alumni community. The graduates of this law school contribute to the program of legal education in so many ways: as adjunct professors, moot court coaches, career mentors, financial supporters and – of course – as employers. The alumni community is represented here today by members of the Board of Visitors and by members of the Class of 1975, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their commencement. Please join me in recognizing them.

Thanks in part to our alumni, Seton Hall students have excellent employment outcomes, launching successful careers in every corner of the legal profession. I've seen that Seton Hall Law graduates love to hire the next generation of Setonians. It is no accident that a higher percentage of our graduates obtain valuable judicial clerkships than any other law school in the country. That measure of success is itself an asset, leading to a bumper crop of well-credentialed applicants hoping to obtain a Seton Hall law degree and join this vibrant community.

Our school's success is no accident. It is the product of another invaluable asset: the outstanding faculty, administrators and staff of the school. My faculty colleagues are triple threats: dedicated classroom teachers, nationally renowned scholars in their respective fields and world-class mentors to their students. Class of 2025, the faculty, administrators and staff assembled here today helped you learn the law and launch your exciting professional journeys. Let's thank them. *[applause]*

We are also fortunate to be one component of a venerable university. I thank Seton Hall Provost Katia Passerini for recognizing the special role of the law school and her commitment to our success. We

wish Katia her own success as she departs Seton Hall to become president of Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.

But the most important, least tangible, assets of the law school are the values it embodies. The faculty has worked hard to impress these values upon you, and I charge you to carry them with you into the legal profession.

What are some of these values? Here are four of them:

#1: Respect. Here at Seton Hall, we treat each other with respect. We engage in respectful, constructive dialogue, even about the most controversial issues. We respect legal institutions – the judiciary, legislative bodies, the Constitution. None of our institutions are perfect, and we are engaged in many efforts to improve them. But fundamentally we recognize the need for the Rule of Law. It is the foundation of a healthy society, and it deserves our respect, now more than ever.

#2: Integrity. From the day you arrived at Seton Hall, you began to develop your reputation for honesty and trustworthiness. It is no accident that professional responsibility is a required class. Lawyers must maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct, and I know all of you are ready to satisfy that obligation.

#3: Service. A law license is a license to help others. Our law school's Center for Social Justice exemplifies this value. Our keynote speaker Judge Chagares is one of many Seton Hall graduates engaged in public service. Whether in the public sector or private practice, through pro bono projects and other forms of representation and advocacy, you will have an opportunity to put your legal training to work as servant leaders. Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian nationalist and himself a trained lawyer, once said: *"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."*

#4: Love. Even before I arrived at Seton Hall Law, I was told it was a "loving community." I have seen that love in action. I have seen students caring for one another. I have seen faculty, administrators and staff members display compassion for students and colleagues in times of need.

And our love is not only for each other: Professor Paula Franzese teaches us to love the law. One reason we love the law is that we love each other – law binds us together as a society, as a community. Martin Luther King observed: *"Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love."* So we love justice. We love the law.

Class of 2025, please continue to live these values. Stay close to your classmates in the years ahead. Nurture the Seton Hall Law community in the wider world. Continue to make us proud.

Congratulations!