

COMMENCEMENT INVOCATION

Among the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence just one was Catholic. At the time of the signing Charles Carroll of Carrollton was reputed to be the richest man in the thirteen colonies. He was a delegate from Maryland to the Continental Congress. At his death in 1832, at the age of 95, he was the last surviving signer of America's cornerstone document. In 1826, invited by the Mayor of New York City to participate in the 50th anniversary celebration of the Declaration, Charles Carroll reflected on its meaning with the benefit of historical perspective:

I do hereby recommend to the present and future generations the principles of [the Declaration of Independence] as the best earthly inheritance their ancestors could bequeath to them, and pray that the civil and religious liberties they have secured to my country may be perpetuated to remotest posterity and extended to the whole family of man.

Much more recently, in an audience at the Vatican with participants in a conference on combatting crime, Pope Leo stated:

The Holy See is firmly convinced that the authentic implementation of the rule of law remains indispensable for integral human development. No truly just society can endure unless the law—and not the arbitrary will of individuals—remains sovereign (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 408), while no person or group, regardless of power or status, may ever claim the right to violate the dignity and rights of others or of their communities.

The consonance between the idea of the United States of America and Catholic teaching about the rights and dignity of the human person is evident even in these two brief quotes. The Catholic identity and mission of Seton Hall Law School in promoting the rule of law and securing our democracy is top-of-mind this morning in our school's 75th anniversary year and the 250th year of our nation's founding. We celebrate our graduates and send them into the world to be servant leaders of a free society.

Let us pray...

Lord, bless these graduates. Sustain their hopes. Through dedication and discipline, they have gained knowledge and skills preparing them for service to our nation. May they prove themselves faithful guardians of the rule of law. Grant them their high destiny as your daughters and sons, effectively and ethically advocating for justice.

Bless the families and friends who have been a constant support during their graduate's years of study. May they know how much their dependable presence has meant.

Continue to bless the life and work of our commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient, Camille Vasquez. And look graciously upon the 50th anniversary alumni in attendance and their classmates celebrating from a distance.

Lord, enable Seton Hall Law School and Seton Hall University to employ the riches of our Catholic heritage to educate and enlighten all who seek learning and wisdom.

We ask your unfailing guidance for President Msgr. Joseph Reilly, Provost Erik Lillquist, Dean Ronald Reich, for the University Regents and Trustees, and law school Board of Visitors and Alumni Council.

Inspire our outstanding faculty, sustain our administration and staff.

Invoking all the holy Names of God, we pray and say together...AMEN.

Rev. Nicholas S. Gengaro, Chaplain

May 27, 2026