

## Commencement 2006 Remarks by University President Rev. Scott R. Pilarz, S.J., May 28, 2006

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Earlier this spring, during our celebration of Jesuit Heritage Week, the Division of University Mission circulated cards citing a line from St. Ignatius Loyola. They read, "not only ought you continually to love and cherish each other, but to communicate that love to all." This is an occasion for just that.

Today we honored five people who communicate love in a variety of ways: Wycliffe Gordon clearly loves music and labors mightily to perform it and to pass it along to the next generation. Dr. Gordon's performance today reminds all of us of how the University was affected by and responded so generously to the disaster of Hurricane Katrina. From welcoming students from Loyola New Orleans to service trips, symposia and special collections, Scranton showed its characteristic generosity and willingness to help. Kate Haser loves the Ignatian commitment to service and she lives a "faith that does justice," the consummate "woman for others." In honoring Kate, we also acknowledge the many Scranton alumni who have served in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps in the past half century. Brian and Dianne Murray love this community and this University and have devoted decades of their lives to building up both. They have left their mark on our campus not only in the creation of beautiful facilities and spaces but also in spirit. And my Jesuit brother, Herb Keller loves the mission of the Society of Jesus and has given his life to the formation of young women and men in the Ignatian tradition of scholarship and service. I am deeply grateful to all of them for gracing our ceremony and representing so well the University's highest ideals and aspirations.

Today we graduated students to whom love has clearly been communicated. Love from parents and families, first and foremost. This occasion belongs as much to them as to our graduates. So much was sacrificed along the way so that we could celebrate today. As you watched your daughters and sons or husbands and wives walk across this stage, I hope your hearts were filled with pride as my heart is filled with gratitude, gratitude for the parents, grandparents, siblings, spouses and all those who selflessly contributed to our graduates' success.

I now ask all the graduates to stand and join me in applauding you.

While our graduates were with us at the University, no group contributed more to their success than the Scranton faculty. They are a precious resource not only for their rigorous scholarship and tremendous teaching ability. They are molders of minds and shapers of souls. The most recently canonized Jesuit saint, Alberto Hurtado, might well have had our faculty in mind as he wrote these words: "In order to teach, it is enough to know something. But to educate, one must be something. True education consists in giving oneself as a living model, an authentic lesson." Thanks to our faculty, Scranton is a home to wisdom, a place where true education occurs day in and day out. Scranton professors communicate love for their academic disciplines and love for their students. The aim of Jesuit education is that our students will "go forth and set the world on fire." The faculty are the igniters of that fire, the keepers of the Ignatian flame.

Our campus is home to other "true educators" as well, the members of our staff. They communicate love for the University in many different ways. Our conspicuous care for one another is a result of the ethos they establish. No other university of which I know is served by such dedicated women and men. I have spent more than half my life on campuses of one kind or another, and after three years here I am more than ever convinced of the quality of this community and the people who constitute it.

For more objective evidence, let me quote a graduating senior who recently wrote about her experiences here: "looking back on my four years, I have been reminded constantly of why I chose Scranton. I have made friends here whom I consider my family. I have developed a faith that I will take with me for the rest of my life. There is just something about this campus that I know I could never have found anywhere else. Four years ago my Mom drove me here to visit the campus and . . . as we drove up Linden Street, I knew in my heart this is where I wanted to go. As I finish up my degree here, I know from the bottom of my heart that this was always where God wanted me to be." That certainly sums up the Scranton I have come to know in your good company: Friends, faith, the place where God wanted you to be.

Think about who you were before you came here and how much has happened since: all the growing, stretching, striving reaching, and changing. For undergraduates, especially, how young does eighteen seem to you now? For example, would you ever now write anything like what I'm about to read? It's an email sent on August 9, 2002 from

one incoming freshman, screen name “Astrojock,” to his future roommate. I’m not making this up: “Hey, what’s up. I’m just writing to say hello and to figure out what’s going on this year. I guess I’ll tell you a little about myself. I’m 18 years-old and I live with my parents. Basically I love staying active in sports. So that’s the run down on me but trust me . . . there is more to me than that. I am not just a dumb jock or whatever you want to say. Well write me back and we can start figuring this whole college thing out.” Believe it or not, the roommate showed up after all. They are still friends. And I hope they figured this whole college thing out.

I hope for three more things as well. First, that all of you will cultivate and keep your Scranton friends. Stay close, grow even closer. Dance at one another’s weddings. Stand as godparents to each other’s children. Mark life’s most important moments by each other’s side. As a Jesuit friend of mine is fond of saying, “the conversation will get even richer and the jokes will get even funnier.” Conversation among Scranton friends will be a consolation for years and years to come.

A second hope: that you will come home to Scranton and not just at five year intervals for reunions. This University is yours now, more fully than it will ever be mine. Come home and walk the Commons; come home and visit with faculty and staff, let them know where your life has lead. Stop by my office and tell me how I should be running the place. That’s your right, the prerogative of every Royal – and it’s also your responsibility. Scranton is fully yours now. I pray that you will take an active role in shaping the institution that shaped you. Today you join generations stretching back to 1540 formed in the Jesuit tradition of education. We entrust that tradition to you, and we do so with high hopes and great confidence that, in the words of sacred scripture, the good work begun in you will come to completion.

Finally, take Scranton with you, take the spirit of this place. Build this kind of community wherever you land in life. Our world sorely needs people like you, Scranton people, who have been well schooled in mind and heart. A few weeks ago, at a barbeque with some seniors, the subject of Bon Jovi’s latest success came up – obviously one of the more serious conversations I’ve had of late. The song asserts that “there’s only one place they call you one of their own.” Loyal son of New Jersey that I am, I claimed it as a hymn to the Garden State. I was challenged by one of you. “That’s a Scranton song,” he argued. I stand corrected, especially as the song speaks to the spirit of a University such as ours: “it doesn’t matter where you are, it doesn’t matter where you go, if its a million miles a way or just a mile down the road, take it in, take it with you when you go.” As you go, I hope you will take with you the spirit of Scranton: the spirit of rigorous intellectual inquiry, never settling for the quick fix or the easy answer; the spirit of *cura personalis*, caring for others as individuals, especially those in poverty or consigned to the margins; the spirit of uncompromised commitment to the magis, a restless desire for excellence grounded in gratitude for all that God has done for you; the spirit of Ignatius Loyola that send you forth today to set the world on fire.

God bless you. God bless Catholic and Jesuit education. God bless the University of Scranton.