

**Remarks by University President Rev. Scott R. Pilarz, S.J. at the Aug. 25, 2007, New Student Convocation**  
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NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION  
AUGUST 25, 2007  
REV. SCOTT R. PILARZ, S.J.,  
UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON PRESIDENT

Mr. Kuehner, members of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Canny, distinguished members of the faculty and administration, parents, families, and member of the Class of 2011. I welcome you to this important event in the life of The University of Scranton. With the arrival of our newest members today, the University community is made whole and complete again. And, while you join this community in a time of momentous transition, I want to reflect with you on the constant graces that have been Scranton's blessing for almost 120 years. As you can well see on campus today, and as you will well know in the years ahead, certain accidental changes are inevitable on campus: buildings come and go, classes abide for all too short a stay, styles and conventions wax and wane, but the substance of The University of Scranton is ever the same and it is that sameness I want to celebrate with you this afternoon.

Foremost among Scranton's enduring aspirations is academic excellence. All that we do supports our striving toward truth and wisdom. Since 1888 when Bishop O'Hara had hope enough and courage to found St. Thomas College, this institution has kept promise with an uncompromising desire to find through the life of the mind a pathway to God's will. Generations of Scranton faculty have generously shared with students their expertise and experience. Our faculty is second to none in promoting student success. Starting in 1942 with the arrival of members of the Society of Jesus, student success came to be measured in a very particular Jesuit context. The roots of Jesuit education reach down to the Renaissance and stretch always in the direction of advancing God's greater glory.

St. Ignatius Loyola and his first companions shared the conviction that God's glory infuses all of creation and can be accessed through every academic discipline. At Scranton we seek knowledge not merely for its own sake, but for the sake of a world in need of healing and hope. Scranton graduates shaped in the Ignatian spirit are ever a source of such hope. Hope is what you represent in your arrival here. We welcome you warmly into this community of scholars dedicated to the proposition that life, especially the life of the mind, is best lived generously in the service of others.

That kind of Scranton service is exemplified by Dr. William Canny. Like the great Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier, Dr. Canny was a talented and driven student athlete. Since his graduation from the University in 1977, those talents and drive have been put at the service of the poor and marginalized. Dr. Canny has worked in and through the Church toward the same ends that shape our Scranton days. I am delighted to honor Dr. Canny today and to hold him up as an example to be emulated. He is an inspiration to all of us and especially, I hope, to the members of the Class of 2011.

In Tracy Kidder's book, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*, Dr. Paul Farmer is quoted as asking, "You want to see where Christ crucified abides today? Go to where the poor are suffering and fighting back, and that is where he is." For years now, Dr. Canny has stood by the poor, and through his efforts points beyond crucifixion to the promise of resurrection. I am grateful to Dr. Canny for returning to his Alma Mater and for representing its highest aspirations so splendidly.

A sense of aspirations is so very apparent today all across our campus. The aspiration of parents and families warrants special attention. For eighteen years now, parents have been preparing the Class of 2011 for today, pointing them in the direction of a place such as Scranton, a place where the good work begun in them under the care of their families will come to fruition. To parents and families, thank you on behalf of the University community for entrusting your daughters and sons to us. We are committed to a common cause, that of eliciting greatness out of the students whom you have brought here today. In four years time we will gather again at Commencement for a different kind of celebration. But today, I want to acknowledge the bittersweet quality of this moment. Times of transition in the life of an institution make for a mix of anxiety and awe. Times of transition in a family can be even more intense as well as touching and true. The truth is, the next four years will pass all too quickly. While they last, I urge parents to play an active part in them. Your job is far from over. And though your influence may not be so immediate anymore, it is lasting and we welcome you as partners in the project of undergraduate education at The University of Scranton. Today you join this community as well, and you are most welcome.

And, members of the Class of 2011, before you say good-bye today, be sure to thank your parents and families for

the rare privilege that is fully yours now. These next years in your lives will be significant in ways you can't possibly anticipate or grasp on this muggy August afternoon. Across the days and years ahead you will, I hope, engage fully in all that Scranton has to offer and embrace this University as warmly as it embraces you today.

God bless you, God bless the Class of 2011, and God bless The University of Scranton.