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Be a Hero

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Be a Hero : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Saturday May 6, 2017

Be a Hero

By Eric F. Spina

Good afternoon!

Welcome to the 2017 graduate commencement and hooding ceremony.

Graduates, this is a day for which you have prepared and worked. A day for which you have studied. A day for which you have scratched and clawed and fought. A day that sometimes you thought would never arrive. But. Here. We. Are. *This* is your day.

After working so hard for a year or two years or five years or eight years, a day seems like an insignificant length of time, but no...this is a day to be cherished, a day in which every moment should be enjoyed and relished, a day that is to celebrate you and your accomplishments. *This* is an extraordinary day, and I am honored and humbled to be a part of this ceremony with you, your families and friends, and your faculty as we celebrate your remarkable accomplishments.

I know very well that while your academic work has been your own, you could not have attained this advanced degree without the moral and tangible support of others. Graduates, please rise, face your loved ones, and give them a rousing round of applause for their care and concern, their patience, and their love.

To members of the faculty and staff: Thank *you* for creating an environment that has allowed these students to stretch themselves academically. Through your caring and devoted mentorship, you have encouraged these graduates to reach high, to dare to be great. You have prepared them to use their education and faith to serve others. Graduates, please rise again and express your gratitude to your faculty and staff with a hearty round of applause!

I don't have to tell you that graduate school is intense. It requires a high level of focus and dedication, the traits that mark the greatest musicians, scientists, engineers, teachers, health care professionals, theologians, entrepreneurs, artists, communicators, and business leaders.

Graduates, today marks the end of one grand journey and the beginning of a new one — one that's filled with endless possibilities if you continue to face each day with faith and courage, an open mind, and an open heart. With this advanced degree from the University of Dayton — and all it represents — you *are* ready to make your powerful mark in the world.

While you have taken different paths to your degree, you have much in common. You are all intellectually curious and highly motivated. You are all passionate about your fields of study. You are all dedicated to causes greater than yourselves.

Many of you have learned to balance jobs and family with the rigors of classroom work, team projects, laboratory research, and clinical rotations. Some of you have made great personal sacrifices as you've traveled halfway around the world to earn your advanced degrees at our university, a university you now call home.

Still others have performed world-class research alongside faculty members and professional researchers, published peer-reviewed papers, and presented at national conferences.

All of you have honed critical thinking skills and complex problem-solving abilities. And, at a Catholic, Marianist university, you've learned to build community across differences and adapt to a changing world with faith and optimism.

One of my favorite authors is Chris Lowney, who writes about the four pillars of great leadership — namely self-awareness, ingenuity, love, and heroism. Today, I challenge you to find your "mighty purpose" in life. I urge you to live an authentic life, rich in meaning, relationships, and what Lowney calls "spiritual wisdom."

First, as you take the next step in your life's journey, work hard to achieve self-awareness, as I truly believe that this is critical to be an effective leader. Know your strengths and weaknesses, build diverse teams with people who complement each other and you, and can work together toward a common goal.

Secondly, use your ingenuity and creativity to work with others to create transformative solutions to complex problems in our society. Persist, be resilient, and don't let failure be a roadblock.

Third, love others and create an environment of love around you — both at home and at work. You will see that an environment of love inspires and encourages, it builds trust and community, and it will make your days a joy and not a chore. Your University of Dayton education has prepared you to see God in others, and this alone is a motivation to embrace differences and love others.

Finally, be a hero: do work that is heroic. That's my overriding encouragement to all of you. Use your education to make a difference in this world that needs many differences to be made. Make a child's life better. Advance the frontiers of medicine. Use your knowledge to create products and services that help those who most need help. Use your creative talent to help us all see the truth. Use your education to serve others, to make positive changes in the world.

The University of Dayton will always be an important part of you, and you will always be part of this special campus community. This will always be your home, and we will welcome you with open arms whenever you return. I urge you to stay involved in the life of the University of Dayton, *your* alma mater.

Members of the class of 2017, we are so proud of you. We are filled with joy over all you've accomplished, but even more so, with who you have become. We know that you will use your University of Dayton education as a beacon in a world in need of your heroic leadership.

Congratulations, and best of luck!