

Alumni eNewsletter - May 23, 2024



172nd Commencement Ceremony

**Embracing Challenge, Common Humanity and Hallmarks
Are Front and Center on this Special Day**

NDNU's 172nd Commencement Ceremony on Saturday, May 4th, was an especially inspirational event. Despite the early morning downpour, no spirits were dampened by the weather. Over 400 faculty, staff, family members, and friends gathered to celebrate the 61 students receiving undergraduate, credentials, and master's degrees.

Denise Sandel, Jacqueline Yujuico and Tiffany Vera, all from the School of Business and Management, began the procession by carrying the American flag, California flag and NDNU flag, respectively. Jose Carlos Bonilla, student speaker, led the 2024 graduating class.



"Today is the culmination of years of hard work, perseverance, focus, and dedication," said Anne Hannigan, Associate Vice President for Research Administration Emerita at Stanford University and Vice Chair of NDNU's Board of Trustees, before she performed the Invocation. She continued, "You have been blessed to study and learn here at NDNU – in an environment where education and values converge for the greater good. Today, you join a proud line of graduates who have made a lasting and positive impact on their families, communities, and places of work."

Sr. Jean Stoner, Chair of NDNU's Board of Trustees, echoed these sentiments in her speech, noting that, "For 173 years, this University has educated women and men of excellence, integrity and service. Today, it is you, our newest graduates, who make us proud." Sr. Jean ended her speech by emphasizing, "As you move forward, remember what NDNU has meant to you. Stay involved and invest in NDNU when you can."

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Excerpts from 2024 Keynote Speaker, Sr. Joan Burke, SNDdN **Together We Can Change the World; School of Life is What Counts the Most**

"Today I have chosen to share with you some of the learnings life has taught me. You are all persons of

experience. On hearing these reflections, try them on and see if they fit. If they do, be affirmed. If not, do not throw them away too quickly, but put them aside and test them against your experience at a later time. Often, new shoes do not seem very comfortable initially, but after some time our feet become more at home in them.

The first learning I would like to share is to recognize and own our common humanity and our sharing a common home, Earth. I still remember the impact that the photograph of Earth taken by Apollo 17 in December 1972 had on me when I was a young adult. What most struck me then was that there were no boundaries on the earth. It was one planet, our common home: beautiful, round, like a seemingly fragile "Blue Marble" as the Apollo photo came to be called, with the dominant colors of blue and green, signs of hope, and new life. Many years later I came to notice similarly there were no boundaries demarcated on the UN Flag. For me, the principal common challenges of our times for all of humanity are the ever-deepening of inequality and the existential threat of climate change. These are not contained within any boundaries. They mark, and even scar, all our societies.



They are larger than any of us. Singly we can do little to address them. But together, we can change the world. The Earth is our one, and only home. It is a common good, belonging to all of us. Let us join together to care for it – even until our children's children of the seventh generation, as indigenous peoples would say."

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[Excerpts from 2024 Student Speaker, Jose Carlos Bonilla](#) [Embracing the Journey](#)



"Winston Churchill once said: 'Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts.'

As we stand here on the threshold of a new chapter in our lives, it is impossible not to reflect on the journey that has brought us to this moment. Today, we celebrate not just the culmination of our hard work and dedication, but also, the beginning of a new adventure filled with endless possibilities.

Our time in this graduate program has been a transformative experience both personally and professionally. We have immersed ourselves in the complexities of research, honed our presentation skills, and expanded our horizons through endless writing. But beyond the textbooks and case studies, we have also formed lifelong friendships, forged invaluable connections, and discovered our true passions.

After my first class at NDNU, I was excited. It was evident that I had enrolled in an amazing university. I liked the intimate classes. I enjoyed the individualized education. And most of all I loved the dedication of the faculty and staff.

Fast forward to my last semester. I still loved all those things about the program, but I found myself tired of working long hours at work and trying to finish the Capstone project without losing my mind. I was overwhelmed, tired and exhausted. Despite the setbacks, I refused to give up. I persisted! I found inspiration through my faith in God, my fellow classmates, my loving family, and our dear professors."

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