

## Living with Gratitude

- *Undergraduate Commencement*

- *June 12, 2011*

- *Stephen V. Sundborg, S.J.*

Welcome to the highpoint of the academic year, and the culminating event, class of 2011, of your education at Seattle University. This is where it has all led, to this great celebration, this big win for you in Key Arena. How glad you and we are that your families and friends are here to honor you and to celebrate with you.

The other day I was invited to give a class on leadership. I rarely am allowed in the classroom. When I opened it up for questions saying “Ask me anything whatsoever you want”, a student named Joe, one of your fellow graduating seniors, asked me: “After all of the messages we have received over these years, if you had to say, Fr. Steve, what is the one thing you would most want us to take with us at graduation, what would it be?” Without a pause, without thinking about it, I heard myself saying to Joe, “What I would most want you to take with you would be to live with gratitude.”

“To live with gratitude”, I’m not even sure where that came from in me; it sort of surprised me. It is my deepest belief. What I most want for each and every one of you—more than all your knowledge, more than success or wealth, more than service, more even than a certain kind of faith—is that you live your lives with gratitude.

If gratitude has been instilled in you by our education at Seattle U., if that is the new attitude you’ve learned to have over these years, then we are successful and so are you. If living with gratitude has come from the hopes and generosity of your families, from the care and passion of your professors, from the faith and values of this Catholic and Jesuit university, from your abundant opportunities and activities and growth over these years, and if it has come from your friends and your relationships, such that you now live with gratitude, then you have what I most hope you graduate with this day.

I say this because I believe that true service and work for justice comes more powerfully from gratitude than from anywhere else such as conviction, or duty, or guilt. I believe that true success and the richness of a life of friends and family and love has its source more in living with gratitude than in anything else. I believe that a staying power through challenges, disappointments, and setbacks comes from an abiding gratitude for life. I even believe that your path to faith, whatever your faith and spirituality will be, will come from and find its way forward and its shape from living with gratitude.

A friend of mine loves to say, “Fear makes the world go round.” I think “Fear makes the world go wrong.” It is gratitude that makes the world go right and it is gratitude that makes your life go right and will channel all of your Seattle University education in a life-giving way for the world and for you.

So graduate with gratitude and know our gratitude for you and our prayers for you!

It is with this same gratitude that at your graduation you are able to honor, to thank, and to express your gratitude to an exceptional group of students who longed to graduate from this university as you are doing today, but were prevented from doing so.