

# commencement of 2005 graduates

*On May 21, 2005, Marquette Law School held its annual hooding ceremony as part of the University's commencement activities. One hundred sixty-five new Marquette lawyers heard remarks by E. Michael McCann, District Attorney of Milwaukee County, and their classmate, Timothy S. Laffredi, among others. Although the spirit of a graduation ceremony cannot be altogether captured in words, we hope that by reprinting Mr. McCann's and Mr. Laffredi's remarks here we can give you a sense of this exciting evening.*

## Remarks of Dean Joseph D. Kearney in Introducing Mr. McCann

It is a privilege for me to introduce Mike McCann, District Attorney of Milwaukee County and tonight's speaker. As the chief prosecutor here, Mr. McCann has been entrusted with the awesome power to determine which individuals to charge and for what crimes. If ever a position demanded good judgment, it is this.

But Mr. McCann is not merely the District Attorney here. He is, as is sometimes colloquially said, the dean of district attorneys across the country. (You may be sure that, although I use the "dean" title colloquially, I do not use it lightly!) Mr. McCann has been the District Attorney here for 37 years, an extraordinary run. The voters have returned him to office time and time again because of his skills as a lawyer and an administrator and also, I both hope and believe, because of his judgment and even wisdom. Even in particular instances where others or I might disagree with him, no one doubts his commitment to justice and his integrity. The resulting reputation in the legal profession is a national one.

Although the following story might initially seem self-serving, I would like to note that I once had the privilege of serving as Mr. McCann's lawyer. Those of you who were here a few years ago will remember when the county pension scandal broke. Mr. McCann invited me to breakfast at some greasy spoon on the west side of Milwaukee, and we talked about my representing him in an effort to roll back some of the giveaway (I had some experience in this area of constitutional law). I gave a little bit of advice as to how he might proceed. Now it is true that Mr. McCann ultimately came up with better legal representation—he went *pro se*, if I recall correctly. But you know from your legal ethics classes that, given the nature of our conversation, I was, during the conversation, Mike McCann's lawyer.

I really share the recollection because it underscores Mr. McCann's integrity. The legal effort he pursued was contrary to his own economic interest, as a longtime government official. It is true that the recollection may also show something else. Recall his decision initially to retain me and then not to continue my services even on a pro bono basis. Can we see in this an ability to correct initial bad judgment? Let us not say.

In all events, it is a privilege for me to introduce E. Michael McCann, District Attorney of Milwaukee County.

## Graduation Address of E. Michael McCann

Thank you, Dean. You are correct about my deciding to represent myself in the matter that you describe, but recall what sort of client a lawyer who represents himself is said to have.

Dean Kearney, faculty members, graduates, parents, family, and friends, truly this is a joyous evening. Three years or more of intense academic effort are drawing to a close, and the graduates will soon be lawyers.

Surely one of the most felicitous of human virtues is that of expressing our appreciation to those whose kindness and generosity have been of benefit to us. In that spirit, parents, grandparents, spouses, and siblings are due heartfelt thanks for their generous economic and emotional support. Faculty, administrators, and school employees are also owed a profound debt of gratitude.

Graduates, be assured that the pride your loved ones feel for you this day knows no bounds. This is a precious time, a time of completion, a time of achievement, a time to celebrate, a time of joy, a time to remember.

Permit me to begin by explaining why I, too, regard this as a happy occasion. The Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office regards itself as blessed by its strong bond with the Marquette University Law School.

Four of our former assistant district attorneys, Professors Daniel Blinka, Thomas Hammer, Gregory O'Meara, and Rebecca Blemberg, are members of this law school's faculty.

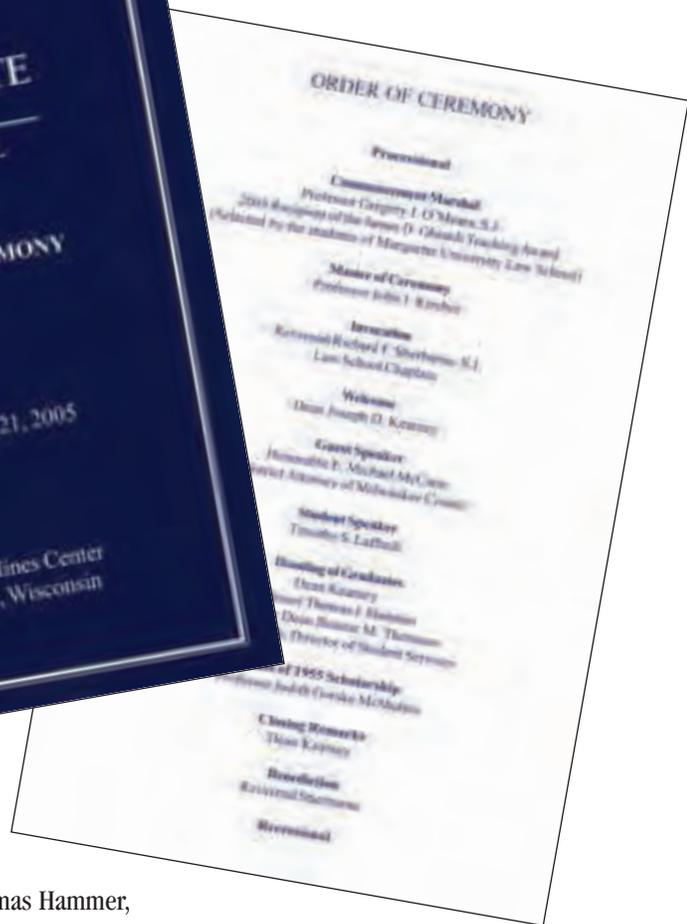
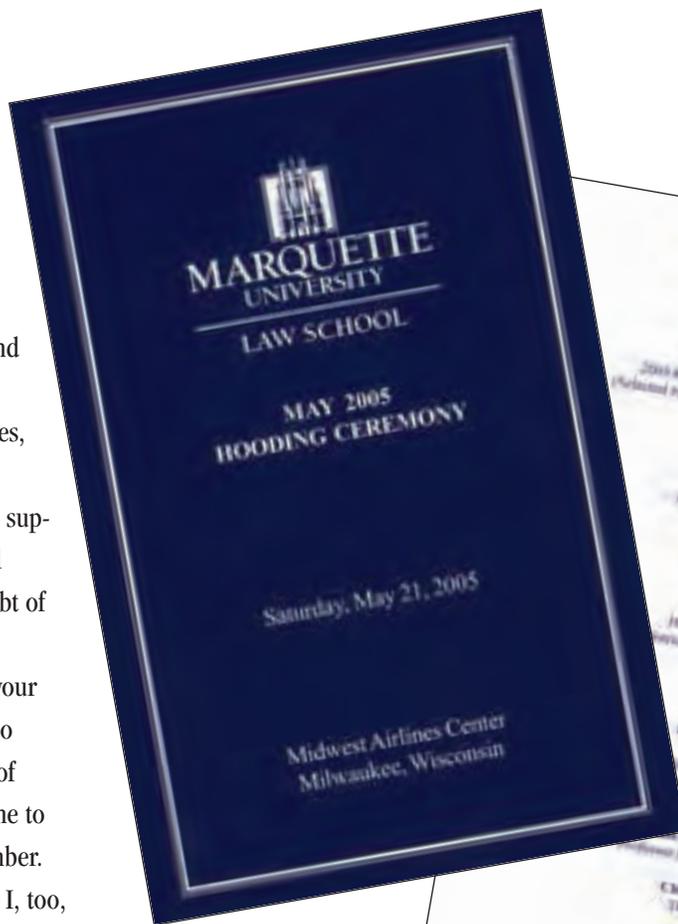
Four of the graduates of this Class of 2005 will be sworn in as assistant district attorneys on May 31, just ten days from now. They will join a substantial number of other Marquette Law School graduates, present and past, who have distinguished themselves as prosecutors with integrity and who have graced this community with many years of high-quality, dedicated public service in the cause of justice.

**B**ut I wish to speak more broadly as well. Now that you are receiving your law degree, some will say to you that you deserve to exact a handsome living from society because you have gone to school for so long and have prepared yourself with such effort.

Persons subscribing to this principle believe that society owes you something because you have educated yourself. I know that some of you carry enormous debt incurred to secure your education. But I believe that, contrary to the claim that education merits an affluent lifestyle, society's provision of education to you, and God's gracious granting of an excellent intellect to you, vest you with a serious obligation to use your gifts to serve others, particularly those less fortunate in our land.

Despite years of sustained economic prosperity for many, poverty still haunts urban and rural America. Father Peter J. Henriot, S.J., of the Center of Concern, has noted that "over 34.6 million people in the United States—one of every eight Americans—are poor . . . ." This is 12.1 percent of our people. Many experience periodic hunger, live in substandard housing, and lack basic medical care. Henriot further states that "one in five children under the age of six in our country is poor."

As lawyers, we ought never be deaf to the cries of the impoverished, of the immigrant, of the developmentally disabled, of those of marginal intelligence, of the sick, of the addicted, of crime victims, of illiterates, and of others similarly situated and devoid of funds. Under the summons to each lawyer to the profession, legal assistance extended to such persons in need—service *pro bono publico*—is regarded as the duty of every lawyer.



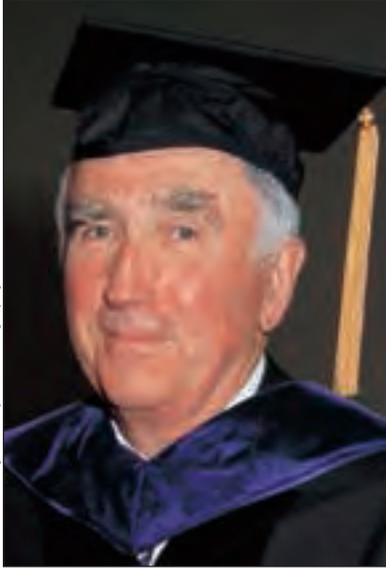


Photo courtesy of Empire Photography

*“Ultimately, success for us lawyers lies in the type of human beings we choose to be. Be lawyers of integrity and decency with a passion for justice and a concern for others. Be good fathers and faithful husbands and loving mothers and wives of fidelity. New lawyers, live courageously with integrity by the principles in which you believe.”*

I hope for your lifetime that you regard the generous provision of such legal service as a serious professional responsibility. We as lawyers better than anyone else know that those caught in the toils of the law or requiring the assistance of the courts can do little for themselves without lawyers to represent them.

One of the most significant advantages of higher education is that it equips a person to live “the examined life.” By this is meant that the individual through learning and introspection becomes aware of what is happening in his or her life and exercises judgment and understanding with respect to the directions his or her life is taking. The flow of events and ever-changing circumstances, particularly the high pressure of law practice, will tend to push or pull a person in one direction or another.

I invite you to submit our society and the modern practice of law to a critical scrutiny. In reflection, identify and establish your own true priorities. Having embraced those priorities, be prepared for a lifetime to recognize and resist the incessant push from many directions to incrementally distort—or, indeed, to totally replace—those priorities.

Living the examined life is a lifelong enterprise. Let me suggest that your first priority ought be your Creator. A deep commitment to God will profoundly affect all that you do and become as lawyers. The character aspects that usually develop in a lawyer whose life emphasis is on moral values are quite different from those of a lawyer, for example, whose emphasis is on the accumulation of property. Clearly, the lawyer turned to God has the potential of becoming a lover of neighbor, a true servant of the client and the community. The lawyer focused on accumulating property incurs the sad likelihood of caring more for things than for his or her obligations to the client and to the community.

Surely, family ought also be a priority. If married, cherish your spouse in a part of your heart to which you admit no other affection. Treat that spouse ever gently in act and word, for fear is an enemy of love.

Realize that children are with you for oh so short a time. Make no mistake. Don’t fool yourself. No amount of wishing and no amount of wealth can buy back even a minute of a balmy summer day when your son or daughter was one or two or four or six or eight or ten years old. If you do not seize the opportunity to spend time with your children when they are young, that chance is gone forever.

Your professional work, of course, will always be a priority. Lawyers are often required to work long hours to prosper and sometimes simply to survive. You will desire to improve the economic lives of your children.

But seriously consider that the best that you can give your spouse and your children is your time with them. A former pastor noted to me that dying persons have often shared their last reflections with him, and that not once has such a person said that he or she wished to have spent more time at work.

In the Old Testament, God tells a prophet of his great love for him, and really for all human beings, saying, “I have written your name on the palm of my hand.” Law graduates, etch into one palm the name of your God and on the other palm etch the names of your spouse and your chil-

dren. And every morning when you rise, stretch those open palms before your eyes and rededicate your lives to those priorities: God and family.

If some of you feel called to enter public service at the city, county, state, or national level, I urge you to do so. While all judges and district attorneys are lawyers, many other officials at all levels of government bring to their work, and enrich the quality of their performance through, their skills as lawyers. Elected public life is no cup of sweet tea. Yet, truly, the quality of our democracy in the past has been, and hopefully in the future will be, greatly enhanced by the participation of lawyers in elected public office.

The challenges that stretch before your generation of lawyers are immense. Will business lawyers, labor lawyers, and international lawyers assist with sound counsel those American entrepreneurs who wish to provide family-supporting wages to American workers and a fair return to investors and to still survive the challenge of a rapidly burgeoning low-wage Chinese economy? How will health lawyers assist clients in answering the questions of death and dying, of stem cell research, of huge numbers of uninsured persons? How will lawyers for the elderly protect the interests of this fast-growing and vulnerable segment

of our society? How will immigration lawyers deal with our shrinking world, and with the hundreds of thousands who seek to enter and remain in this country, some legally and others illegally? Will lawyers in the criminal justice field, 140 years after the end of the Civil War, finally extirpate the ugly remaining vestiges of racial prejudice? How will lawyers protect our cherished notions of privacy ensconced in the Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution in the face of fears triggered by the spread of terrorism? And what is to be said of the poverty lawyers' pursuit of economic justice in our society, which in recent years has seen a growing divergence between those of great wealth and the impoverished? And, of course, in the years ahead there will be challenges not yet even in our imaginations.

Ultimately, success for us lawyers lies in the type of human beings we choose to be. Be lawyers of integrity and decency with a passion for justice and a concern for others. Be good fathers and faithful husbands and loving mothers and wives of fidelity. New lawyers, live courageously with integrity by the principles in which you believe. Bless you and may you love and serve well your God, your family, your clients, our profession, our society, our nation, and the cause of justice. Congratulations.

### Graduation Remarks of Timothy S. Laffredi

Dean Kearney, faculty and staff of Marquette Law School, friends and family, and fellow classmates: It is an honor to speak on behalf of the Class of 2005, and I will do my best to convey the pride, excitement, and gratitude we all feel today.

First, I would like to thank the dean, professors, and staff of Marquette Law School. Your dedication, patience, and professionalism extended our education far beyond the classroom. And—at the risk of trivializing such legal staples as the rule against perpetuities and *Marbury v. Madison*—I think we learned the most in our three-plus years from you as people. I cannot give each of you the thanks you deserve in this short time frame, so please accept this general “thank you” on behalf of each of the graduating seniors. I also would ask you to reflect on the individual lives you have touched, and to take pride in having played such an important role in shaping a dynamic group of new lawyers. You have individually and collectively changed our lives for the better forever, and for that we thank you.

Next, I would like to thank our family and friends. Without you, we would not be sitting here today, on the verge of receiving our law school diplomas. While we may not have been the easiest to deal with at times, it was your support and guidance that helped us survive this odyssey. You have seen us through some difficult and stressful times, but have also celebrated with us while we were at our best. We can never fully express how much your support means to us, so please accept our thanks and know that we love you.

And now to my fellow graduates. I have devoted a substantial amount of time and thought as to what I would say to you—in lawyer lingo, of course, that means I started working on this at least two hours ago—and I have thought about the variety of suggestions that I have been given on how to frame this speech. These included scrapping the speech altogether and performing a Napoleon Dynamite dance tribute to our accomplishments. But I have opted, instead, for a less aerobic, more introspective address that I hope captures the emotions we all are feeling today.

When I first told my grandmothers that I was going to attend law school, they both said, “We don’t need any more lawyers.” I responded with, “Grandma, I’m not going to be that kind of lawyer.” And now, after having been trained in the art of semantics, I realize I was right. They meant that they didn’t want to see me becoming a heartless ambulance chaser (and I apologize if any of you will be working for any heartless ambulance chasers). But after having gone to this University, after having been taught by these professors, and after having been surrounded by these classmates, I have learned an important lesson that will stay with me forever: people first, lawyering second.

I don’t know if I can express how truly honored I am to be considered a peer of yours. Being a part of a group that has the determination, intelligence, personality, and promising future that you all have is something I have never experienced in my life. We all have different backgrounds, different strengths and weaknesses, different personal struggles, different goals (and different alcohol tolerance levels). But, over the last several years, we have all developed into competent professionals, well-prepared for the challenges that face us down the road. Whether this is your fourth or fifth career choice; whether you moved directly from undergraduate to law school; or whether you began your part-time legal education in 1999 and managed to juggle a family, full-time job, and law school—all of us sitting here today have proved that we have what it takes.

And I’m not just talking about the 70-some thousand dollars we (or, in a very few cases, our parents) have paid to Marquette, or the 1,350 hours of classroom instruction we have endured, or the endless hoops of fire that the Board of Bar Examiners has made us jump through; any anal-retentive, Type A personality could have done all that! Rather, I think it’s the quality of the people in the Class of 2005 that makes me so confident in our prospects. I know quite a few of you personally, and I think a few of us have spent more time together in Hegarty’s than in the classroom. But based on the people you have shown yourselves to be (to me at least), I can say that I am honored to be a member of the Class of 2005.

I am excited to see what the future has in store for us. Some of us in this room will become judges, some of us will become legislators, and some of us will not practice law at all. But we all possess the skills to be good lawyers. In fact, I am so confident in our skills that I would hire any one of you to represent me in a future harassment injunction if the Alumni Relations Office becomes overly enthusiastic in its fund-raising efforts!

Today is our day. Enjoy your last few moments as law students, because on Monday, we will be full-fledged attorneys. As a wise man once said, “Tina, come get some ham.” Well, Tina, it’s our turn to get some ham. We have earned it, and we deserve it. And tomorrow, when we are finally holding our diplomas for the first time, I think we should remember the collective wisdom of all of our grandmothers: The world doesn’t need any more lawyers. It needs us. Thank you, congratulations, and good luck. •



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