Joyful Commencement Focuses on Faith and Family

Confetti flew, air horns honked, and, thanks to a group of graduating nursing students, stethoscopes swung triumphantly in the air. As the members of the Catholic University Class of 2014 celebrated their accomplishments during the 125th annual Commencement Ceremony May 17, their energy and excitement, combined with the perfect spring weather, resulted in a celebration that could best be described with one word: joyful.

The ceremony was held on the east steps of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and featured San Diego Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers as the Commencement speaker. Speaking with a self-described “Alabama twang” to a crowd of thousands stretched across the University Mall, Rivers peppered his address to the graduates with a two-word Latin refrain: “Nunc Coepi,” or “Now I begin.”

“In our prayer, our habits, our relationships, our profession, it is applicable to everything,” he said. “It certainly applies to you graduates who now are beginning the next chapter in your lives. You now begin, but this is ongoing. You begin again and again and again.”

Though he may be better known for his skills on the football field, Rivers is a devout Catholic, husband, and father of seven. He lists his life priorities as “faith, family, and football, in that order.”

Rivers encouraged graduates to pursue the things they love.

“What are you passionate about? What fires you up?” he asked. “Life is too short to just go through the motions. Discover your passion, if you haven’t already, and do it to the best of your ability.”

Catholic University President John Garvey also addressed the new graduates, speaking about courage. He said one of the best examples of real-life courage was his mother, who faced her husband’s death with bravery and strength.

“Mom didn’t start being courageous the day my dad died, or the day she moved away from our family home forever,” he said. “She practiced courage by getting out of bed each morning to build a home and to raise us well. She learned fortitude in the ordinary challenges. When the time came to show us how to be courageous in the hard moments, it came naturally.”

Garvey encouraged the graduates to live courageously in the next chapter of their lives by putting their faith into action in their personal lives and careers, no matter what career paths they take. He also advised them to be courageous with their families by making their spouses and children a priority.

During the ceremony, Catholic University awarded honorary degrees to Rivers as well as Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, archbishop of Manila, and Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Community of Sant’Egidio.

Cardinal Tagle, a CUA alumnus who received his licentiate in sacred theology in 1987 and a doctorate in theology in 1991, was the principal homilist and celebrant during the Baccalaureate Mass May 16. The Mass took place before a standing-room-only crowd in the Basilica and was broadcast live to an international audience courtesy of the Eternal Word Television Network and Catholic TV. Speaking without notes, the internationally respected cardinal assured graduates that each of them has a specific place prepared for them by God.

“So my dear graduates, find the place that Jesus has prepared and then wherever that might be, take the path of Jesus, seek His righteousness, proclaim His truth, live by His compassion, seek His love.” — K.B.
35 Years @ CUA
Tywanna Wright
Special Police Officer, Department of Public Safety (DPS)

To many students, faculty, staff, and visitors, Tywanna Wright is one of the first faces they see when they arrive on campus. She is the face behind the camera when CUA ID photos are taken.

On Coming to CUA
I grew up in this area and was working in security. My neighbor worked in custodial services here at Catholic University and he told me about a job in security and suggested I apply. I went in for an interview and was hired on the spot.

On Why She Stayed
Day-to-day, I process parking tickets, parking decals, photo IDs, keys, and much more. Everything comes through here. It keeps me busy.

This is a fun place to work, and a good place to work. The people, especially the students, make it fun. Sometimes I see the same students over and over (to replace lost IDs). I call them my children. I enjoy meeting students and staff when they start their careers at the University. I have a unique opportunity to share their excitement and to help make the process of starting something new easier.

I used to work in uniform when there were a lot of dances on campus. I really enjoyed that. I also worked in uniform when the Pope [Benedict XVI] visited.

My sister works in enrollment and two other siblings have worked here. Some of my neighbors are public safety assistants and work in the residence halls. I brag about Catholic U and they all come here to work! I've even run into people I went to elementary school with [at Bunker Hill Elementary in Brookland].

Changes Witnessed
Campus itself has changed a lot. The Pryzbyle Center, Hanman Hall, the law school, and up to DuFour — that area was all woods when I started. And they'd just opened the Metro [Brookland-CUA station].

When I started working here, there were no computers. To make IDs, we had this big Polaroid camera and a machine that would type your name and Social Security number onto the ID card. It would take two days to make an ID.

— M.M.H.

Website Honors Fulton Sheen
A rchbishop Fulton Sheen, one of six Catholic University alumni under consideration for sainthood, was featured in the spring issue of the magazine (“For Some, the Road to Sainthood Goes Through CUA,” page 24). On March 6 his canonization cause made a great stride forward when the Vatican approved a miracle attributed to his intercession — the complete resurrection of a stillborn baby.

Before he developed a worldwide reputation for evangelization, Archbishop Sheen was a professor who taught philosophy at CUA from 1926 to 1950. Thanks to a new website launched by the University this spring, the full story of Archbishop Sheen and his special relationship with Catholic University is now online.

Visitors to the website fulton-sheen.cua.edu can learn about Archbishop Sheen’s life, read testimonials from his former students, look at The Inner news clippings from his time at CUA, and see scans of his writings. The website also has the full listings of courses taught by Sheen and books he wrote, and information about his canonization cause.

CUAdrama Taps Other Disciplines to Ponder Shakespeare
Though it was written hundreds of years ago, William Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice is still a controverisal play, raising issues of prejudice and anti-Semitism. A classic story about revenge, justice, and redemption, the play focuses on a questionable business deal between Antonio the Merchant and Shylock the Jewish moneylender. When Antonio cannot fulfill his end of the bargain, he is challenged to pay a shocking fee: a pound of his own flesh.

When the CUA Department of Drama decided to present the classic comedy as its spring production, faculty members knew the choice might spark discussions. Director Eleanor Holdridge, head of the M.F.A. Directing Program, and she hoped the play — which was staged April 24 to 27 — would help audiences confront their own hidden prejudices and cultural blind spots.

“Hopefully people seeing this play can recognize themselves in that and realize, ‘I'm not always the fairest person,’” she said. “It’s always great when rehearsal becomes not just about putting on a show, but that you also begin to see something in yourself and gain some kind of understanding about how you live in the world that you didn’t have before.”

To provide more insights on the play, the drama department hosted a pair of interdisciplinary panel discussions featuring faculty members from various departments and schools within the University.

The first discussion, “Shakespeare’s Shylock and Usury in Renaissance Europe,” took place on April 25 in the Hartke Theatre Upper Lobby. Panelists included Jerry Muller, chair and professor in the Department of History; Tobias G Gregory, associate professor of English; and A.G. Harmon, clinical assistant professor of law.

Patrick Taute, chair and associate professor of drama, said he was impressed with how willing participating faculty members were to help shed light on a classic play.

“I’m really impressed with the quick response that we got,” he said. “This (was) a great opportunity to put forward our best work and invite people from across the campus to share their expertise.”
Scholar of Sacred Language

Sidney Griffith, Semitic & Egyptian Languages

Rev. Sidney H. Griffith, M.S.L.S. 1967, S.T.L. 1967, Ph.D. 1978, professor emeritus in the Department of Semitic and Egyptian Languages and Literatures, has written seven books and more than 120 articles in major journals of Near Eastern and Christian Studies, mostly on the history of the Christian communities living in Islamic lands and on the history of Muslim-Christian relations, especially in the early Islamic period. He was awarded the 2009 Albert C. Outler Prize of the American Society of Church History for the Best Book on Ecumenical Church History for his book, The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam. Also in 2009, he received the Rumi Peace Award for fostering interfaith dialogue. In May, he retired after more than 35 years as a full-time faculty member at the University.

Q: How will things change now that you are professor emeritus?
A: The reason I wanted to retire is I am in my 76th year. When you are in your 40s the horizon is wide and you can think ‘Someday I’ll do this and someday I’ll do that,’ but the horizon narrows as you get older. There are tasks I would like to finish, especially with research and writing. So this is a different way of experiencing my academic life without so many of the administrative responsibilities.

Q: When and how did you become interested in the study of Syriac and Arabic languages and their role in understanding Muslim-Christian relations?
A: After being ordained, I was sent to Catholic University in the 1960s originally to study Hebrew and later I went on to study Syriac. I am also self-taught in Arabic. The reason I wanted to study Arabic is because there is an enormous amount of surviving texts written in Arabic by Christians in the early Islamic period and hardly anyone was studying these texts. This is the way we learn about Christians and their relationships to Muslims, especially Christians who lived among Muslims. There is still much to be done in this area, from discovering texts to translating them, studying them, and seeing what we can learn about Christian history in the East.

Q: What does this academic department mean to you?
A: This department is very integral to the mission of the University and the life of the Church. It’s a role in understanding Muslim-Christian relations?

Students Consider Their Calling

Sister Ruth Harkins is telling her vocation story to students in a classroom in Gibbons Hall on a Thursday night in April. As a guest speaker in the School of Theology and Religious Studies (STRS) course International Mission Experience, she talks about growing up in Delaware, the second of five children in an Irish Catholic family, and how she found her “home” with the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Scranton, Pa. “Our vocation is where we become our best selves,” says Sister Ruth.

Vocation is a recurring topic in the course, which is made up of students who have committed to a summer mission trip to Jamaica or Belize. The course is one component of their preparation. They have attended a Campus Ministry-sponsored weekend retreat, have been fundraising to help pay for their trips, and have been meeting with Brother Jim Moore, O.F.M. Conv., associate campus minister for justice and missions.

“We must listen to where God is calling us,” says Sister Ruth. “Where are my gifts going to be used the best? Where do I feel at home? Where is my joy? It’s okay to question. We are all called to holiness. That doesn’t mean we all become sisters and priests. Find out where your talents are most needed.”

The students hang on her words. Many of them know Sister Ruth through her work in Campus Ministry, where she is an associate campus minister.

International Mission Experience was developed by STRS in conjunction with Campus Ministry as a full three-credit course this year. Previously it had been a one-credit elective taken by students who were signed up for University-sponsored international mission trips. “The first thing we did was make the course more robust theologically,” says William Mattison, associate professor of moral theology and associate dean of undergraduate studies in STRS, who worked with Brother Jim to develop the curriculum.

“God has a special love of the poor,” says Mattison. “In this course students’ desire to serve the poor is nourished by an academic understanding of Catholic social teaching.”

Through lecture, guest speakers, discussion, and personal reflection, students explore such questions as: What does Christ’s service teach us? Why do people suffer? What unique challenges exist in Jamaica and Belize? What fears and hesitations do they have about their upcoming mission trip? How does one hear God’s call to mission?

“It’s clear the students are comfortable with one another as they continue to share from a place of honesty. ‘I’m still struggling with the idea of knowing when and where God is calling you and that makes me anxious,’ shares one student.

Her classmates and her instructor work to put her at ease. “Just being aware that you are struggling with the concept helps make you open to God. Like Sister Ruth said, we need to be open to listen,” says another classmate.

Read the cover story on page 16, for an in-depth look into the experience of a CUA mission trip.
Music School to Mark Golden Anniversary

CUA’s school of music will celebrate 50 years in 2015 with a series of concerts and performances. Since its beginnings as a department in 1960, and becoming a school in 1965, the music program has educated thousands of musicians and scholars who continue to perform, teach, compose, and serve as sacred music directors throughout the world.

The music school will celebrate its 50-year legacy with special events, highlighted by a return to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Concert Hall in a full program by the CUA Symphony Orchestra and choruses on Sunday, April 12, at 8 p.m.

Music school events in the Harke Theatre include a concert by the National Symphony Orchestra on Jan. 12, Verdi’s Requiem March 19–22, and Seoul Happy Fiesta Oct. 22–25.

Other events scheduled on and off campus include the U.S. premiere of Sacred and Liturgical Music of the Baroque from the Bolivian Rain Forests 19–22; and a concert by the National Symphony Orchestra and choruses on Sunday, April 12, at 8 p.m.

Students Carry on O’Connell Legacy

This fall, for the first time, Catholic University has recipients of the Most Reverend David M. O’Connell Service Scholarship in all four class years. During his 12-year tenure as University President, Bishop David M. O’Connell emphasized a commitment to service on campus. Though he is now serving as bishop for the Diocese of Trenton, N.J., his legacy lives on at the University through the service scholarship.

In 2010, Joseph McQuarrie, a senior from Lawrenceville, N.J., who is majoring in elementary education, was named the first recipient of the scholarship, which honors students who embody the bishop’s dedication to service. Awarded every year, the four-year, full-tuition scholarship is available for any entering freshman from the Diocese of Trenton.

As a high school student, McQuarrie was active in a service class that planned outreach activities in the school and the local community. At CUA, he is active in Campus Ministry, mission trips, and community service projects at So Others Might Eat (SOME) and Bethlehem House, a home for adults with intellectual disabilities.

“(The scholarship) kind of set the tone for how I am going to live my life and it puts everything in perspective,” McQuarrie said. “This has helped define my life at CUA around service and helping others, and that has been the greatest gift.”

Sophomore Veronica McCarthy, a political studies major from Manalatan, N.J., was also awarded the Bishop O’Connell scholarship, thanks in part to her activity with the service organization Living in Faith. Effectively while she was in high school. At CUA, McCarthy regularly participates in homeless food runs, where students distribute food and water to local people in need.

“If you have a deep sense of service toward others, you are more humble and that helps out society in the long run,” McCarthy said. “If we have a world filled with self-serving people, we’re not going to get very far.”

IPR Celebrates Four Decades

The Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies (IPR) commemorated its 40th anniversary with a dinner March 22 at the Embassy Row Hotel in Washington. More than 160 people attended the event, which raised $85,000 for the institute.

Organized in 1974 and well known for many years under its previous name, the Life Cycle Institute, IPR is a community of scholars and researchers who are currently engaged in the analysis of public policy issues related to Catholic social thought.

As part of the celebration, Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, M.A. 1960, Ph.D. 1963, was awarded the Bishop John Joseph Keane Medal for lifetime service to Church, country, and University. Sister Carol Krehm, president of the Catholic Health Association of the United States, delivered the evening’s Dean Hoge Memorial Lecture.

Sister Carol started her lecture by calling Cardinal McCarrick “one of those people who has a heart for the world.”

“It is really hard to find the spot on earth he hasn’t traveled to and tried to help,” she said. “He epitomizes the joy of the Gospel and so infectious that we all find ourselves wanting to share his cause and to help in any way we can.”

She also spoke of the importance of evangelization and spreading what Pope Francis calls “the joy of the Gospel.”

“How incredibly differently we make choices and respond to situations when we believe in a loving God who is, in the words of that lovely hymn, ‘the maker and keeper of our days,’” she said. “Without that faith, it is no wonder choices are so often destructive of self and others.”

IPR Director Stephen Schneck (pictured top left) said the work of both Cardinal McCarrick and Sister Carol perfectly align with the mission of IPR. He said the entire evening was a joyful one, with former students and fellows coming together to celebrate.

“It felt more like a wedding than a fundraiser,” Schneck said. “There was that kind of sweetness and happiness about the whole thing. It was really a marvelous event.”

Cardinals Dinner: $31 Million Raised for Scholarships

Eight U.S. Catholic cardinals and 750 guests gathered in New York City on Friday, May 30, for The 25th American Cardinals Dinner, held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel. A record-breaking $2.1 million was raised at the dinner, surpassing the previous record of $2 million that was raised at the 12th annual dinner in 2001, also held in New York City.

The American Cardinals Dinner is a fundraising event for scholarships for The Catholic University of America. Since its inception the dinner has raised more than $31 million.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, M.A. 1981, Ph.D. 1985, and John Carvey, President of Catholic University, served as co-hosts for the dinner.

Prior to the dinner, Cardinal Dolan was the principal celebrant and homilist at a Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Visiting cardinals, bishops, and clergy concelebrated the Mass.

At the end of the dinner, St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson, J.C.B. 1978, J.C.L. 1979, personally invited everyone to next year’s American Cardinals Dinner, which will be held April 24, 2015, in his archdiocese. As they left, guests were presented with a gift bag which included a harmonica — an homage to Stan Musial, the famed St. Louis Cardinals baseball player who became known for his harmonica playing.

O’Connell Scholarship recipients include (from left) sophomore Veronica McCarthy, incoming freshman Catherine Ziemer, junior William Neney, and senior Joseph McQuarrie.
Ask the Experts

The Right Beginning for Your Baby

• Think about where to deliver your baby:
  All hospitals are not the same. Some are prepared for unexpected problems while others would need to transfer your newborn if something goes wrong. Ask also if the nursery will be screening your baby for congenital heart disease — a new universal recommendation that is saving lives. Babies born at home should also be screened.

• Think about when your baby should arrive:
  Most babies are healthier if born on their own timetable — not yours or the doctor’s or nurse midwife’s. When labor is artificially induced, it is three times more likely that a caesarian section will result. A baby born even one or two weeks early may have problems related to prematurity.

“Crib death” is associated with many unsafe sleeping situations, including sleeping in a parent’s bed, on a soft surface, on the stomach, or in a crib with potentially suffocating objects like bumper pads. The national “Safe to Sleep Campaign” provides guidelines and tips on how to keep your baby safe.

• Think about ways that your baby will learn:
  Research supports how important the interactions between a baby and his caregivers are from the very beginning; for example, it is recommended that parents begin reading to their baby by six months of age. How the brain actually develops is dependent upon these early experiences. We have tremendous potential to influence healthy development in babies and toddlers.

• Think about how to keep your baby safe at home:
  SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) remains the leading cause of death in this country for infants from one month to one year of age.

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• Think about who cares for your baby:
  Many parents struggle with decisions regarding when, if, and how to return to work after the birth of a baby. It is natural for parents to be anxious when they first leave their infant in others’ care. Research suggests that babies can thrive in many different caregiving environments, whether they are cared for at home by a parent or in an out-of-home day care. Settings that work for the toddler may not be best for an infant. The most important task for the young infant is to develop a sense of trust or confidence that his needs will be met by those caring for him. For that reason many recommend that in the first few months, a caregiver only care for one or two infants. As your baby matures, he may benefit from interaction with other toddlers. When studies have been done to explore the impact of day care on children, the most important factor appears to be how comfortable their mothers were with the arrangement. Take time to ask neighbors and your pediatric nurse practitioner or pediatrician for recommendations, visit day care centers, and interview caregivers. The American Academy of Pediatrics provides guidelines and resources for parents to consider when evaluating settings. (Visit cuamagazine.cua.edu for a link to these guidelines.)

Most of all: enjoy your baby!

— Elizabeth Hawkins-Walsh, a pediatric nurse practitioner, is clinical associate professor, assistant dean for clinical affairs and community partnerships, and director of M.S.N. programs in the School of Nursing.

Happy Holi!

What better way to celebrate spring than with a festival of colors (known as Holi, a Hindu celebration of color and love)? In late April, CUA students enjoyed a spring fest, which, in addition to the color explosion, featured a bonfire, music, food, and crafts. To view a photo gallery of the festival, visit cuamagazine.cua.edu.