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Video: John Kerry '76 Discusses Law School Experience

Boston College Law School

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Secretary of State John Kerry '76 talks about his experience at Boston College Law School in the above clip. Watch the full speech

Chestnut Hill, MA--U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry told Boston College’s Class of 2014 that his Boston College education had inspired him to serve others—and he urged BC’s newest graduates to draw on the same lessons to guide their own lives and careers.

"The diploma that you will receive today isn’t just a certificate of accomplishment," said Kerry, a 1976 alumnus of BC Law School. "It’s a charge to keep. It’s a powerful challenge to every single one of you, because you have already been blessed with a world-class education, and with it comes responsibility. Part of that responsibility is taking to heart the values that you’ve learned here and sharing them with the world beyond BC.

"That spirit of service is part of the fabric of this school, just as it is part of the fabric of our nation," he said.

Kerry praised “the welcoming spirit of this community,” which he had experienced himself upon arriving at the Law School, particularly in the presence of then-Law School Dean Robert Drinan, S.J., whom Kerry credited with encouraging him to study law. For Kerry, BC proved to be the right place at the right time: In a turbulent era of "division and disillusionment," he had found his faith tested by what he had endured and witnessed in Vietnam. Reading the classic works of St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Paul, he said, was "not just an abstract academic exercise, but a means to understand where and how everything fit."
He continued, "The people I met here were putting into action the words of the Jesuit motto that you’ve heard already today: ‘Men and women for others.’ Every institution has a mission or a motto—that’s the easy part. The hard part is ensuring that they’re not just words. We have to make sure that even as our world changes rapidly and in so many ways, we can still, each of us, give new meaning to our values."