



Brooklynn Leonhardt (Philosophy '17)
(DePaul University/Jamie Moncrief)

“LAST LESSONS” REVEAL OPPORTUNITIES IN CHALLENGES



Craig Hartman (DHL '17), left, and the
Rev. Dennis H. Holtzschneider, C.M.

The quest to upend political and cultural “laws” with compassion, beauty and persistence infused LAS’s 119th commencement on June 11. Coordinated only by their embrace of Vincentian values, each speaker evoked enthusiastic applause as they urged the new graduates to wield their knowledge for good.

“YOUR EXISTENCE IS RESISTANCE.”

Brooklynn Leonhardt (Philosophy ‘17) dedicated her student address to those without degrees who labored long so that the graduates in the audience could receive a diploma.

“I’m a first-generation multiracial student. I’m the eldest of seven siblings. I’m the daughter of indigenous peoples, the product of colonialism, violence and oppression, but also brilliance and survival,” said Leonhardt (see brief on page 16).

Although their classwork is complete, “we will always be students, including the knowledge that life places on us” through adversity, she said. She called on her fellow graduates to “labor with love and compassion” throughout their careers. “DePaul has instilled within us the importance of creating intentional community and continuing to encourage discourse on pressing issues.”

While some will enter careers that directly connect to service and social justice, others need to decide how social advocacy will fit in their future.

“We are left with the task not only to radically redefine ourselves, but also our world. What kinds of words will you articulate when you are faced with injustice, and what will you teach future generations?” she asked.

The audience erupted in a standing ovation when Leonhardt concluded, “Your existence is resistance.” The Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., outgoing DePaul president, added, “Your comments today were DePaul at its best.”

“CHICAGO IS IN YOU.”

“It is the leadership of global cities that is truly shaping the world’s destiny,” said

keynote speaker Craig Hartman (DHL ‘17). An acclaimed architect, he designs buildings and neighborhoods that reduce social inequality and slow climate change.

“Environmental degradation, climate change, social inequity and especially poverty seem intractable, but they are not laws of [science]. Political constructs, not the limits of science and our imaginations, are the biggest barriers to solving these challenges,” he said.

City governments are addressing critical social and environmental issues worldwide, and LAS graduates, with their backgrounds of service and civic engagement, are uniquely prepared to contribute to their communities and challenge the status quo.

“Graduates of DePaul ... are educated in critical thinking, ethics and discernment,” he said. “Be an empathetic advocate. Listen and speak up.”

He urged graduates to “find a way to travel. You will witness firsthand that the world is full of rich culture and smart, resourceful, kind people.” Then, he told graduates to return to Illinois when their “hitchhiking thumbs” are worn out.

“Chicago is in you, and it wants you back.”

“ONE LAST LESSON”

Fr. Holtschneider said that commencements serve as one last lesson for graduates, and he urged them to study how Hartman uses his career to improve the world.

“He rethinks whole neighborhoods, how people can live together in tight places,” Fr. Holtschneider said. “He thinks about the sustainability of the human community and what we should build. He thinks about how what we build affects social inequity, either reinforcing it or undoing it. He thinks how design serves

the common good. And he thinks about beauty and space and light and ease of function because he cares about how the built environment affects people.”

LAS Dean Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco recalled being awestruck when he first visited the Cathedral of Christ the Light, designed by Hartman, soon after it opened in 2008. “As a trained architect, I knew that great architecture can be a strong source of expression, but I did not expect to feel emotionally lifted the way I did,” he said.

He also was moved by Leonhardt’s student address. “I was uplifted by her commitment to the common good and filled with hope for the future.”



**Rather than
consuming
knowledge,
we will
become
makers of
knowledge.**