

## CLASS OF 2008 URGED TO MAKE LOVE OF LEARNING CENTRAL TO LIFE

### Acclaimed Historian David McCullough Addressed the Graduates At BC's 132<sup>nd</sup> Commencement May 19

CHESTNUT HILL, MA (May 19, 2008) Celebrated author and renowned historian David McCullough encouraged the Class of 2008 at Monday's Commencement Exercises to "make the love of learning central" in their lives by forever remaining students of the world.

"Read, read, read! Read the classics of American literature that you've never opened," said McCullough. "Read your country's history.

How can we profess to love our country and take no interest in its history? Read into the history of Greece and Rome. Read about the great turning points in the history of science and medicine and ideas."

Thousands of parents, friends and family packed Alumni Stadium on a sunny, but blustery day to witness the Boston College's 132<sup>nd</sup> Commencement Exercises, which included song selections from the University Chorale and salutes to the Golden Eagle Class of 1958 and the Silver Eagle Class of 1983.



David McCullough addresses the Class of 2008.

McCullough was one of five recipients of honorary degrees at Commencement, along with Brother Celestino M. Arias, OFM Cap., Jennie Chin Hansen Abrams, Anne P. Jones and Vice President and Special Assistant to the President William B. Neenan, SJ.

This year's graduating class includes residents from 59 different countries, a fact reflected by 59 national flags waving behind the staging area.

McCullough, author of the Pulitzer-Prize winning *John Adams*, spoke of his own national pride and returned to the wisdom of the second First Couple many times during his commencement address.

"Abigail Adams put it perfectly more than 200 years ago: 'Learning is not attained by chance. It must be sought with ardor and attended with diligence.' Ardor, to my mind, is the key word," McCullough said.

"For many of you of the graduating class, the love of learning has already taken hold. For others, it often happens later and often by surprise, as history has shown time and again. That's part of the magic."

To get a better understanding of Adams, McCullough explained, he not only read what Adams penned, but he made it a point to read the books John and Abigail Adams read, such as the works of Samuel Johnson, Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift. McCullough said it was in the course of this research that he read Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* for the first time.

**AT RIGHT: University President William P. Leahy, SJ, confers an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters on David McCullough, as BC Board of Trustees Chair Patrick Stokes looks on.**

"Cervantes is part of us, whether we know it or not. Declare you're in a pickle; talk of birds of a feather flocking together; vow to turn over a new leaf; give the devil his due or insist that mum's the word and you're quoting Cervantes every time," McCullough said.



Despite being 60 when he started reading the great authors, he found "joy" in the passages, he said.

"Make the love of learning central to your life. What a difference it can mean. If your experience is anything like mine, the book that will mean the most to you, books that will change your life, are still to come. And remember, as someone said, even the oldest book is brand new for the reader who opens it for the first time," McCullough said.

University President William P. Leahy, SJ, congratulated the students, but also recognized parents and families for their role in the graduates' success. Archbishop of Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, OFM Cap., who offered the Benediction, echoed those sentiments. Fr. Leahy urged students to always remain people of intellectual curiosity, generosity and service.

"If we are not people who wonder, if we never entertain what is new or different, we can easily become rigid and close-minded, never leaving our familiar world with its neat categories and answers," he said.

"When that happens, the wounds of society and the suffering of others will seldom enter our consciousness and we will feel little urgency to question existing structures and viewpoints.

In addition, we run the risk of living shallow and uncommitted lives," said Fr. Leahy. "As you graduates receive your diplomas today, you leave the relative tranquility of the Heights. We send you forth with our prayers, best wishes, and confidence in your abilities. We trust in your generosity, talents and willingness to be men and women for others."

Edward H. Finnegan, SJ, Award recipient Kuong Ly also enjoyed a standing ovation from his classmates when he rose to accept his award.

Alumni Association President Kenneth Pierce welcomed the Class of 2008 to the more than 150,000 living Boston College alumni worldwide.

"From the moment that you walked onto campus four years ago, you became a member of that family," said Pierce. "You will always have a home here."

*--Story by Melissa Beecher, Chronicle Staff Writer*  
*--Photos by Gary Wayne Gilbert*