

COMMENCEMENT 2023 — RIVIER GRADUATES LARGEST CLASS IN RECENT YEARS

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Rivier celebrated its 88th Commencement on May 14, 2023, awarding 744 degrees to associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree graduates. The University honored **Reverend Dennis H. Holtschneider, CM, Ed.D., President of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities**, as Commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient. Rev. Holtschneider addressed graduates on the purpose and mission of higher education.

“The purpose of a liberal arts education at a school with a Catholic heart is for you to look at the world more deeply and truly understand it, to build your skills, and then to commit to act on its behalf,” said Rev. Holtschneider. “That heart hopes for you to become magnificent actors in the world—engaging the world and trying to change the immediacy of individual lives around you or the systems and the social matters that affect all of us.”

The celebration recognized the importance of faith, service, and diversity by awarding three additional honorary degrees to distinguished community leaders. Acknowledging their contributions to the region, Rivier

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conferred honorary degrees on **Margaret “Peggy” Gilmour**, Founder and former President of Home Health and Hospice Care; **Lucille Jordan**, President of Nashua Community College; and **Rabbi Jonathan Spira-Savett** of Temple Beth Abraham.

“Reverend Holtschneider and our Greater Nashua honorees are an inspiration to our graduates on the impact of faith-in-action and education as a catalyst for social change to advance the common good,” said **Sister Paula Marie Buley**, IHM, President.

Rivier graduates **Nikolas Pignone** (B.S. Homeland and International Security) and **Agnes Vataparth** (M.S. Computer Science) spoke on behalf of undergraduate and graduate students, respectively. Pignone reflected on the undergraduate student experience during the uncertainty of the pandemic and concluded, “We have learned life lessons about adaptability, strength, and perseverance that we can take into the world. All these experiences have made us better and more grateful people in the end.”

Vataparth shared her transformational experience as an international graduate student, traveling 7,685 miles from India to Rivier University to pursue a master's degree in computer science. She acknowledged that each of her fellow graduates has a unique story with different goals, expectations, and cultural backgrounds, yet they all came together to share the Rivier experience.



The ceremony was livestreamed and can be viewed at www.rivier.edu/commencement2023. A gallery of Commencement photos is posted on the University’s Facebook page. ■