



May 11, 2025

Commencement Remarks

President Kathleen A. Getz, Ph.D.

Good morning!

To the graduating class, your families, our distinguished faculty and staff, trustees, Sisters of Mercy, alumni, honored guests, and those joining us via livestream—thank you for being with us on this unforgettable day. And a heartfelt shout-out to the mothers in our audience, especially the graduates who are mothers themselves—Happy Mother’s Day!

Graduates, today, your families are likely reflecting on all the moments that brought you to this day. To them, you will always be their precious children. But while we cherish who you once were, we admire deeply the adults you’ve become. You didn’t arrive at this milestone alone. You’ve been lifted by the love, support, and guidance of many. Let’s take a moment to honor parents, families, friends, professors, coaches, and advisors who have stood by you through every triumph and challenge. Let’s give them all a hand.

Before we move forward, I want to acknowledge someone who should be here with us today but is not—your classmate, Timothy Costello. Tim was an Intelligence Studies major who brought passion, energy, and team spirit to all he did. Please join me in a moment of silence as we remember him.

Now, before we begin the official business of conferring degrees, I’d like to share a short story.

In a small-town library—one of those cozy, slightly outdated places where the floorboards creak and the fluorescent lights hum—there was a forgotten book tucked high on a dusty shelf. It had no flashy title, no striking cover. For years, no one noticed it. Until one rainy afternoon, a curious student stumbled upon it. She opened the book and discovered it wasn’t a typical novel—it was more like a journal. The first few pages had been beautifully written, but then the writing stopped. The rest of the book was blank. She took the book home and began to write—her thoughts, her dreams, her fears. Before returning it, she left a note tucked inside the front cover. It read: “This story doesn’t start until you do.”

Graduates, today you hold the blank pages of your own story. Your years at Mercyhurst—filled with learning, late nights, resilience, laughter, and friendship—are your prologue. What comes next is entirely up to you. And if you’re wondering what your next chapter might include, let’s take a moment to reflect on some of the remarkable pages you’ve already written together:

- You were with us as we launched into Division I athletics—and in our very first year, Men’s Soccer won the Northeast Conference Regular Season Championship.
- Another standout achievement, illustrating our commitment to service, was claiming first place in the NEC’s annual food drive, and ending Saint Francis University’s three-year winning streak.

- During your tenure, Mercyhurst Athletics consistently received academic recognition, proving our dedication to excellence both in the classroom and in our sports. For the 2023-24 academic year, we achieved the highest institutional grade point average in our conference, with a 3.518 across 17 Laker teams. Women's Softball achieved the fourth highest GPA among all Division II competitors, and Women's Soccer secured the second-highest GPA, with a 3.81 out of 241 women's soccer teams across ALL NCAA divisions – I, II, and III.
- You were here as we unveiled the first three in a series of 12 historic markers that are being installed across campus as part of our Centennial celebration.
- You stood in the path of totality during a once-in-a-lifetime eclipse—and yes, it really did live up to the hype.

Your Mercyhurst journey began in the shadow of COVID-19—virtual classes, masks, social distancing, and quarantines. But you persevered. You helped revive campus life—Starting with Springfest in 2022 and ending with last week's expanded Laker Fest. There's more:

- You participated in our first Mercy March to show our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice.
- You experienced the first year of STUNT, and you also witnessed our inaugural year in E-sports.
- You hosted amazing speakers, including Anthony Robles, the NCAA Division I wrestling champion born without a leg. His story became the movie Unstoppable.
- You were among the first customers to enjoy our MUber Rideshare program.
- And believe it or not, you and I became Lakers at the same time. I am grateful to have shared that milestone with you.

So now—my help aside—it's your turn. You get to write Chapter One of your story.

Some of you may already have a title in mind. Others are still deciding what genre you're in. That's okay. Life isn't linear—it's full of surprises. It's suspense and humor and character development. It's plot twists, heartbreak, triumph, and growth. I won't pretend the world you're entering is easy. But here's what I do know: The future needs you.

It needs thoughtful leaders. Creative thinkers. Compassionate listeners. Brave storytellers. People who know that every individual—every neighbor and every stranger—carries a story worth hearing. I hope your liberal arts education at Mercyhurst has nurtured those qualities. That you've learned to listen deeply, lead with empathy, and learn continuously. You're ready to write boldly. So don't wait for permission. Don't wait for perfect. Grab your pen and open your book. Write that first awkward paragraph. Make it messy. Make it honest. Make it yours. And most of all—make it count.

Before I close, let me simply say: Thank you. Thank you for choosing this community. For giving your time, your energy, your talents, and your heart. You've left your mark here—and I believe that Mercyhurst has left its mark on you. Whatever your next chapter holds, know this: You'll always have a home here, and a cheering section rooting for you.

Congratulations, Class of 2025. The world is waiting for your stories. Carpe Diem.