



**Belmont Abbey**  
COLLEGE  
*That in all things God  
may be glorified*

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Belmont Abbey College Celebrates 148th Commencement During 150th Anniversary Year**

**Belmont, N.C. (May 18, 2026)** – Belmont Abbey College celebrated its 148th commencement ceremony on Saturday, honoring 309 graduates and marking a milestone in the college’s 150th anniversary year. The day began with a baccalaureate Mass on the piazza of the Abbey Basilica, presided over by Abbey alumnus the Most Reverend John Joseph McDermott, Bishop of Burlington, Vermont. The graduation ceremony followed, led by Chancellor Abbot Placid Solari, O.S.B. and President Jeffrey W. Talley, Ph.D., P.E., who welcomed families, friends, faculty, and staff to witness the culmination of years of study and dedication.

This year’s graduating class is a testament to the college’s commitment to excellence across a variety of disciplines. The class includes 26 nursing majors who are entering the healthcare profession, prepared to provide compassionate, skilled care. Ten students completed degrees in Motorsports Management, with several already securing positions within the industry, including with Automotive North America, AM Racing, and the International Motor Racing Research Center. Psychology celebrated 27 graduates, many of whom plan to continue their education in graduate school.

A significant number of student-athletes also graduated this year, demonstrating dedication both on the field and in the classroom. Among this year’s honorees, Addie Galek, a senior on the women’s soccer team, was named the recipient of Conference Carolinas’ 2025-26 Murphy Osborne Award. In addition, ten athletic teams earned the Messick Award, while the college’s athletic department received the overall Messick Award for the year, the highest sportsmanship honor within the conference. These achievements reflect the college’s mission to cultivate sport and virtue while fostering the holistic development of body, mind, and soul. This graduating class stands as a testament to the college’s commitment to preparing students for meaningful careers and impactful contributions to their communities.

Several legacy families celebrated another child’s graduation, demonstrating the enduring values and strong sense of community instilled by Belmont Abbey College across generations. Susan Reid, a member of the 5th Honors College cohort majoring in Great Books and minoring in Classical Languages, was named the 2026 Valedictorian. The graduating class also includes 22 Honors College Scholarship students, 24 Hintemeyer Catholic Leadership Scholarship scholars, and three seminarians, Matthew Hennessey, Theodore Holthe, and Jeremy Smith, who are continuing the Abbey’s long tradition of forming men and women of faith and service.

“Today, we celebrate not only the remarkable achievements of our graduates but also the enduring spirit of Belmont Abbey College. Each of these students has demonstrated excellence in academics, leadership, and service, and we are inspired by the virtues and character they carry into the world. As we honor our 150th anniversary, we are reminded that the values instilled here will guide them for a lifetime,” said Dr. Jeffrey W. Talley, President of Belmont Abbey College.

A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the 2026 Abbey Student of the Year award to Caroline Gutierrez. The Abbey Student of the Year recognizes a student who exemplifies engagement, leadership, and academic and extracurricular excellence. In a cherished tradition unique to Belmont Abbey, the award recipient delivers a speech in place of a traditional commencement speaker, offering personal reflections and inspiration to fellow graduates.

In her remarks, Gutierrez encouraged her classmates to embrace their unique calling and lead with courage and conviction: “Each of us has been given a unique purpose in this life, and the Abbey has helped us to foster it. One of my favorite quotes is by St. Catherine of Siena, she says, ‘Be who God made you to be and you will set the world on fire.’ So, class of 2026, I encourage you to carry this wisdom with you and share your unique light and gifts with the world. Be brave and stand firm in the morals and values that guide your heart. This is what Belmont Abbey has taught us, that in all things, we may strive for excellence and virtue.”

Belmont Abbey College also conferred honorary degrees on the Most Reverend John Joseph McDermott, Bishop of Burlington, Vermont, and Jesse Aaron Grapes, former headmaster of Benedictine High School in Richmond, Virginia. Both

honorees were recognized for their extraordinary contributions to education and service, embodying the Abbey's mission to glorify God in all things.

For more information about Belmont Abbey College and its programs, visit [www.belmontabbeycollege.edu](http://www.belmontabbeycollege.edu).

**About Belmont Abbey College:** Founded in 1876, Belmont Abbey College is a private, Catholic baccalaureate and liberal arts institution. Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. Guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others. Our beautiful and historic campus is conveniently located just 10 miles west of Charlotte, N.C., and is currently home to more than 1500 students. For more information, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/>.