ONE
NOVA
NATION
When I reflect on Villanova’s second Men’s Basketball NCAA National Championship in three seasons, there is one word that keeps coming to mind—UNITAS. As an Augustinian University, it’s one of our core values and thus, central to our identity.

As I have realized since becoming president, few events or moments unite our University community together quite like Men’s Basketball.

Thousands of Villanovans from around the country traveled from Pittsburgh to Boston and on to San Antonio. It was wonderful to witness you coming together from near and far to cheer this team to victory, and to celebrate Easter Sunday Mass with more than fellow 3,300 Villanovans. The unfailing support and enthusiasm of the Nova Nation definitely played a part in the team’s success this season, and all of us share in this exciting accomplishment.

To Coach Wright, his staff and a wonderful group of student-athletes, congratulations on an incredible season. It was an unforgettable run that Villanovans, and countless others, won’t soon forget. Most especially, thank you for representing Villanova so admirably throughout the tournament—both on and off the court. Your humility, teamwork and commitment to academics were often discussed and lauded, and made everyone in the Nova Nation very proud!

Finally, thank you to the city of Philadelphia for your support. From embracing us at the Wells Fargo Center to lighting up the city in blue and hosting us for a third parade down Market Street, we truly feel the brotherly love!

Thanks to all who played a role in this remarkable journey. Congratulations again to the team—your 2018 National Champions! Go Cats!

Sincerely,

Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, ’75 CLAS
FIRST ROUND:
Jalen Brunson led the team with 16 points.
Three players making their first-ever NCAA Tournament appearances—Omari Spellman, Dhamir Cosby-Roundtree and Collin Gillespie—combined for 29 points and also contributed multiple rebounds, blocks and steals.

SECOND ROUND:
Mikal Bridges was the top scorer with 23 points.
Mikal Bridges and Donte DiVincenzo together contributed 10 of the Wildcats’ 14 three-pointers.

"There is a youthful exuberance with this team that is exciting to me."

JAY WRIGHT
SWEET SIXTEEN & ELITE EIGHT

MARCH 23, 2018 | BOSTON, MA

VILLANOVA vs. West Virginia

Overcoming a 60-54 deficit in the second half, the Wildcats rallied to defeat No. 5 seed West Virginia, ending the game with a 36-18 run to move on to the Elite Eight. Jalen Brunson had 27 points and Omari Spellman 18 in the victory, but defense was also key in the game, as the Wildcats held the Mountaineers to just 39 percent shooting.

MARCH 25, 2018 | BOSTON, MA

VILLANOVA vs. Texas Tech

Solid defense and clutch free throws at the end of the game helped the Wildcats overcome a challenge by No. 3 seed Texas Tech. The Red Raiders’ defense restrained Villanova’s shooting at times, but the Wildcats answered with their own defensive display, limiting their opponents to just 33 percent shooting. In the end, Villanova was able to edge ahead for good, and cut down the nets as winners of the East Regional.

"We play every game like it’s our last. Sticking to our core values."

JALEN BRUNSON

VILLANOVA WILDSSTATS

SWEET SIXTEEN:
Four players scored in double digits: Jalen Brunson (27), Omari Spellman (18), Mikal Bridges (14) and Eric Paschall (14).

For the seventh time in their last eight games, the Wildcats held their opponent to 43 percent shooting or lower.

ELITE EIGHT:
The Wildcats advanced to their sixth Final Four appearance, and their third in the last 10 years.

Jalen Brunson was again the game’s top scorer with 15 points, and Eric Paschall ended with 14 rebounds.
The Wildcats shattered a Final Four record by dropping in 18 3-pointers. Villanova made 45 percent (18 of 40) of its shots from long range on the night. Eric Paschall posted a career-high 24 points, and he made 10 of 11 field goals—matching the best accuracy rate in a Final Four game in 45 years. Six Wildcats ended the game scoring in double figures.

"We play together as a team. And that’s what we did tonight."

ERIC PASCHALL

Taking on fellow No. 1 seed Kansas, Villanova brought the offensive fireworks to San Antonio. The Wildcats had tied the record for three-pointers in a Final Four game by halftime, and went on to shatter the record with 18 total triples. Villanova confounded the Jayhawks’ defense, and their pinpoint accuracy from three-point range allowed them to run away with the game.

After the final buzzer, the Wildcats had earned their second trip to the championship game in three years, and words of praise from Kansas Head Coach Bill Self: "We played against a team that may have played their best game."
It was the culmination of a season that had seen Villanova hold the No. 1 national ranking for eight weeks, win the Big East Tournament, break records for scoring and outlast one talented opponent after another throughout a tournament that will be remembered for its historic and memorable upsets of top-ranked teams. But that Monday night in San Antonio, nothing mattered but the game at hand. All that remained was 40 minutes of Villanova basketball against a No. 3 seed with a storied history and a hunger to experience its own upset.

Michigan came charging into the game, taking an early lead before Donte DiVincenzo came off the bench and provided the spark his team needed to take a lead at the end of the first half and never let it go. The second half was a scoring bonanza for the Wildcats, with DiVincenzo continuing his hot streak and Mikal Bridges contributing 19 points of his own. In this game, as with all others throughout this remarkable season, it was the consummate team effort right through until the final minutes. They struggled together, they persevered together and, ultimately, they triumphed together.

“**I really can’t get my mind around it. I never dreamt of this.**”

**JAY WRIGHT**

Donte DiVincenzo was the undisputed Most Outstanding Player in the Final Four. His 31 points, in addition to being a career high, set a record for a non-starting player in the NCAA tournament, and was the most scored by a single player in a championship game since 1997.

Villanova defeated its six opponents throughout the tournament by an average of 17.6 points per game, and became the first team since UCLA in 1968 to win both Final Four games by margin of 16 points or more. Only three other teams in history had won all of its tournament games by at least 12 points.

The Wildcats ended the year with a 36-4 record, the first 36-win season in program history.
“I never played on a championship team at Villanova, but as a fan I am a part of one.”

KYLE LOWRY,
Villanova alumnus, guard for the Toronto Raptors
and U.S. Olympic gold medalist
“Coach Wright, you practice what you preach: humble and hungry, play hard, play smart, play together, and play with pride.”

RANDY FOYE, Villanova alumnus and 12-year NBA veteran, presenting the John R. Wooden Award’s “Legends of Coaching” honor to Jay Wright
For more memories of Villanova’s road to the national championship, visit nationalchampions.villanova.edu