All College Liturgy  
Mount Aloysius College  
September 23, 2010  
Remarks of President Tom Foley

First, let us thank Sister Eric Marie and this choir. I don’t know if you can tell but she has absolutely no fun standing up here conducting the music!! And they sounded pretty good for a group that had exactly no practices before today—am I right Sister!!

Second, let’s thank Father Mark. I have heard three sermons now from Father Mark, and each one has been concise and meaningful—thank you Father. I will have to work on my “inside and outside voices”: now Father.

Father, I don’t know if you heard about the children who were lined up in the school cafeteria one day for lunch. This may have been at your school Holy Name. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. One of the teachers made a note and posted it by the apple tray: “Take only ONE. God is watching.” Moving further down the line, at the other end of the table was a large pile of chocolate chip cookies. A child had written a note: “Take all you want. God is watching the apples.”

Now I am not sure if that was his “inside voice” or his “outside voice”, Father, but it was a very perceptive voice at any rate. Thank you again, Father. We are grateful that you make time for us.

Today’s Gospel from Matthew—“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.”

“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

I’m not sure there are more powerful words anywhere in the gospel. “Whatever you did for the least of my brothers or sisters, you did for me.”

Kindness is truly the universal language. It is also the language most often spoken by the founders of this institution—in its fabric to this very day.

Let me say something about each of those two statements.
**First, kindness is the universal language.** And in just 51 days, I have seen a lot of that language spoken on this campus.

- By the Mt Aloysius Advanced Prep Program (MAAPP) students getting together— even while worrying about their own grades-- to help the one guy that was just not making it
- By the soccer team--which having lost after 94 minutes of a scoreless draw, in overtime, on a penalty kick--still showed the grace to go over as a team and thank the referee who made the call
- By the softball team—who are at least six months from their season opener—gave up a beautiful Saturday to build their own equipment shed (and then offered their lunchtime pizza to the school president who just happened to walk by)
- By a faculty member—who when she realized Michele didn’t have her purse--offered to “spot” her “the dough” so she could sit down in the cafeteria for a wee bit of lunch
- By the six different Sisters of Mercy—who chanced by my office on day one-- and let me know they were each praying for me (by the sixth visit, I have to confess, I started to wonder what I had done wrong to need all these prayers!)
- By the 19 students who showed up at 8:30 last Saturday to do community service at five different projects in the Mt Aloysius “into the streets” program
- By the 15 students who got up at 7:00 on another Saturday to raise our flag in memory of those who lost their lives at 9/11 and those who serve our country today
- And by the incredible number of students who take the time to hold doors open for slowpokes like me walking behind them. Never seen so much door holding in all my life!!

Robert Frost once said that “poetry is what gets lost in the translation.” I hope that these daily acts of kindness—a poetry of the spirit if you will—continue to replicate and multiply here at Mount Aloysius and long after you leave. These acts of generous spirits, of kindness—are contemporary examples of Matthew’s exhortation in the gospel today. “Whatever you did for the least of my brothers, you did for me.” Lots of poetry and kindness on this campus—and it is all prayer. And kindness is truly the universal language.

**Second reflection, kindness—the central message in this gospel today—is also the universal language of the founders of this institution, and at the very core of their, and our, mission.** Mercy and justice, service and hospitality—they frame the lifework of the order and they are the core values in our own mission statement.

This is Mercy Week on our campus, when we celebrate the history and emulate the accomplishments of an incredible group of women. There are over 7,000 Sisters of Mercy in the world today, serving in 47 countries, in over 1000 cities and towns and villages across the globe, in places like Guyana and Guatemala, Panama and Peru, Chile and China, Uganda and the United States, and of course where it all started on Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland.
In American alone, there are 3,857 Sisters of Mercy, another 3,100 associates and over 950 Mercy Volunteer corps alums who live out today’s gospel. They do that by founding and operating 80 schools, including our own; by founding and operating full service health care systems, homeless shelters, long term care facilities and other social service networks that tend to the needs—as it says in today’s Gospel—of the “least” of my brothers and sisters. These modern day angels of mercy and justice, of service and hospitality perform corporal works of mercy on behalf of the poor, the uneducated, the afflicted and the desperate.

Science tells us that you can live for about 40 days without food, that you can live for about three days without water and that you can live for about eight minutes without air. But is very hard to live even one second without hope, and these extraordinary women who took up the cloth of Sister Catherine McAuley over 180 years ago have made it their business—their life’s work—to bring hope, now in 47 countries around the world, in 44 states here at home, in over 500 cities and towns in America.

We in this chapel are among the most fortunate beneficiaries of these extraordinary examples of how to “live a life”—for the “least of my brothers.” 202 women have entered the Sisters of Mercy since the community in Cresson was founded more than 150 years ago. More than two thirds of those spent some part of their ministry with us on these grounds, and many others as well. And we have had 186 students serve as Mercy Scholars, 67 of them as Mercy Presidential Scholars, some of them in this chapel today.

It is a remarkable body of work, one that exemplifies the heart of today’s gospel, and that deserves our praise, our adulation, our emulation. Sister Helen Marie Burns, Sister Nancy Donovan, Sister Eric Marie Setlock, Sister Guiseppe DaBella, Sister Benedict Joseph Watters, Sister Fran Stein, Sister Margretta Phillips, would you all please stand. Sisters, we thank you for showing all of us how to live today’s gospel every day of your lives.

Thank you.