All College Liturgy  
Mount Aloysius College  
September 24, 2013  
Remarks of President Tom Foley

First, let us thank this choir. They sounded pretty good for a group that had exactly 20 minutes to practice with Music Director Nancy Way! We thank you, Nancy, and thanks to our terrific “cantor-for-the-day” Amber Lenhard, and thank you to our three instrumental musicians.

Second, today’s gospel on the Feast of Cana touched on, among other themes, the idea of hospitality—which was our yearlong theme last year at Mount Aloysius. Just a quick story—this one happened at Sister Charlene’s home parish, St. Patrick’s in Newry. The fourth graders were lined up in school for lunch. At the head of the table was a large pile of apples. The head teacher made a note and posted it on the apple tray: “TAKE ONLY ONE—God is watching.” A little bit 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.”

I am certain that every one of our Mount Aloysius students would offer up both their apples and their cookies (as long as the Sisters promised them a novena for their mid-term exams!!). But enough about food—as 600 of you all sit out there thinking about lunch!!!

It is my assignment in these last five minutes to tell just a little of the story of the Sisters of Mercy, who brought us to this very place today.

In the intercessions after the gospel today, we joined together and prayed for those who are suffering from poverty, from unemployment, from homelessness; we prayed for all those caught in the crossfire of conflicts around the world; and we prayed for all at home caught in the downdraft of this relentless recession. We prayed that we might embrace the spirit of the words from another gospel, this one from Matthew, whose words are very simple and very emphatic—

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

You all know these words. I’m not sure there are more powerful words anywhere in the gospel. “Whatever you do for the least of my brothers or sisters, you do 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.** In my first three years at Mount Aloysius, I have seen a lot of that language spoken on this campus.

- By the over 75 students who went on mission trips last year to Guyana and to New Orleans, to Philadelphia and to West Virginia
- By the over 100 students who helped out with our latest Haiti project, which will send almost 200 shoeboxes of school supplies to kids who will be over the moon to receive them
- By our almost 200 student athletes whose teams performed 24 community service projects last year, and received top honors for their good example at the AMCC Annual Meeting
- By the 900 plus students who performed 12,730 hours of community service last year, working on 366 projects with 217 different community partners
- By all the students and staff who step up officially as tutors and unofficially as mentors, *because they have high hopes for each one of you*
- By all the faculty members who go the extra mile—and then some—in and out of the classroom *because they believe in each one of you*
- By the six different Sisters of Mercy who volunteer so many hours here—and who chance by my office on a regular basis—and let me know they are each praying for me.

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 gospel verse—“Whatever you do for the least of my brothers (and sisters!!), you do for me.”

So there is lots of poetry and kindness on this campus—and it is all prayer. And kindness is truly the universal language.

**Second reflection, kindness and inclusion and hospitality—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.

We are in the midst of Mercy Week on our campus, when we celebrate the history and emulate the accomplishments of an incredible group of women. They say that imitation is the highest form of flattery, and all week, we have been honoring the accomplishments of the Sisters of Mercy by trying to imitate them. At Mount Aloysius, we will celebrate the extraordinary commitment of these remarkable women by performing acts of service on our campus and in our community, as part of our Connections classes, on our sports teams, in our clubs and organizations.

You know, there are almost 10,000 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 America alone, there are 3,684 Sisters of Mercy, another 3,264 associates and over almost a thousand Mercy Volunteer corps alums who live out the gospel. The Sisters of Mercy do that by founding and operating over 100 schools from Australia to Belize and from Ireland to the United States, including our own College—and 17 others like it in this country. They also live out today’s gospel by founding and
operating more than 50 full-service health care systems, more than 60 homeless shelters and orphanages, and dozens of long-term care facilities and other social service networks that tend to the needs 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 college 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 over 240 students receive Mercy Service Grants at Mount Aloysius, and 156 of our students have won Mercy Presidential Scholarships, 31 of whom are in the audience today.

It is a remarkable body of work, one that exemplifies the essence of the “common good,” and that deserves our praise, our adulation, our emulation. Sister Helen Marie Burns, Sister Nancy Donovan, Sister Giuseppe DaBella, Sister Charlene Kelly, Sister Benedict Joseph Watters—would you all please stand. Sisters, we thank you for showing all of us how to live the Gospel every day of your lives.

Thank you.