



**Presidents Council & Council on Mercy Higher Education
Annual Meeting September 29, 2013
Remarks Introducing Keynote Speaker Dr. Carolyn Woo—Tom Foley**

Dr. Carolyn Yauyan Woo is perhaps an atypical person of supreme accomplishment--she truly does not enjoy having her achievements announced in her presence. For our purposes this evening, it is nevertheless important that we do so for two reasons: first, to recognize terrific work done in multiple professions; and second, to set the context for the discussion in which we hope to engage.

Dr. Woo is the President of Catholic Relief Services, founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to serve survivors of World War II and Europe. Since that time it has become one of the world's largest and most respected international relief and development agencies, reaching more than 130 million people in nearly 100 countries each year.

Dr. Woo is in turn prolific, profound and poignant, and let me say a word about each of those qualities.

She is certainly prolific. Dr. Woo is the author of dozens upon dozens of journal publications, has delivered hundreds of major presentations, and is on her way to her first half dozen honorary degrees at her still young age. She served on five different editorial boards for business publications during her career in that field. She currently serves on the board of six publicly traded companies (the most well-known of which is Circuit City) and on the board on seven non-profit entities (Notre Dame Australia and Catholic Charities among others). Carolyn Woo is certainly prolific.

Carolyn is also profound. She has received significant and multiple honors for her community service, for her executive leadership, for her teaching (at both institutions where she taught), for her scholarship and for her writing. In that last field, most recently she received the Catholic Press Association's first prize award in 2013 for her monthly column for Catholic News Services (CNS). Forbes Magazine called Carolyn Woo "the best kept secret" in the Catholic Church. I can tell you that certainly she is no secret at her most recent academic institution, the University of Notre Dame. Wherever she spoke, she invariably received "big cheers from the student body." She was "incredibly well-known and well-liked" both inside and outside the Mendoza School of Business whose dean she was for 15 years. And those last two comments come direct from a 2009 graduate of that institution (who happens to be our son).

Lastly, Carolyn is often poignant in her public remarks and in her written expressions of faith, community and service. Since and even before she has turned her focus to Catholic Relief Services in 100 countries around the world she's been writing articles with fabulous titles like:

"Lives, Not Livelihoods: Why B- Schools Must Challenge Students to Serve a Greater Good."
(BIZED Publication of the Association to Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business--AACSB)

"Seeking the Common Good" (Catholic Charities USA, 2010)

"Holding the Line: It's Time To Confront Our Cheating Culture and Begin Leading with our Values
(*Ethics Sphere* Q3, 2009)

"Those Who Gives Us Hope" (*Ethics Sphere* Q4, 2008)

"Personally Responsible" (BIZED, AACSB 2003).

Dr. Woo speaks words that are carefully chosen for their relationship to faith and truth and personal dignity. She also exemplifies character in ways that matter to those of us leading institutions of higher education. I've asked two of our colleagues to help demonstrate these last points, to help provide a full context to Dr. Woo's life and work.

First, Dr. Mary Ann Stevens, RSM, will read a passage on Carolyn's response to the question "what took you to America?" I found this passage in a 2012 interview with Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs. (Dr. Stevens then speaks):

"I set my heart on going to college in America. I was able to collect enough money from my savings and my older siblings to go to America to college. I collected exactly enough money for two semesters: \$800 plus \$800, not a penny more or less. And my brother the doctor paid my dorm fees. So, off I went to college at Purdue. Why Purdue? It was by chance. I met a professor through my sister who was then working at the airline TWA (Trans World Airlines). I was helping out on a Saturday, stapling documents. He suggested that I apply to Purdue, I did, and was accepted. It was 1972.

That first year I took on an absolutely impossible program. I took 42 credit hours, because I thought this was my only chance that I would never be able to come back. It was almost impossible then for a foreign student and especially and undergraduate to get a scholarship, but I applied nonetheless. I was worried, because I did not have a perfect record. It was a very lonely time, and I cried every day at the beginning. I was very homesick. But then I would ask myself what I had learned that day and that heartened me because I was always happy that I could answer yes, I was learning new things each day.

One habit that was very important to me was daily mass. After one year, the scholarship results were about to be announced. I had class that day until 11:20 and mass was at 11:30. But the scholarship office was open only until noon. I had to make a choice: go to mass or pick up the results? I went to mass. I figured that I would postpone any bad news. During the mass I tried to settle with God why it

was so much harder for a girl. I had a one hour conversation with God on the subject. But then I went to the office, and I did get a full scholarship for the next three years. I immediately signed up for summer hours. Not long after, I decided I might as well pack in a graduate degree, so I stayed first for my masters, then for my PhD.

During this time I met my future (and current) husband. He was an American, from Delaware. We met at the Catholic Church we attended, when I was a freshman and he was in a master's program. We were both deeply involved in the church activities, and were both elected to parish council. He was wonderful, and took special care of me. We knew each other over seven years, and were married in 1979. We have two sons, one a doctor, the other teaching theology at a Catholic high school."

Second, Dr. Moya Dittmeier, Executive Director of CMHE, will read us a passage that answers the twinned questions "what brought you to CRS? How did your own journey begin?" (Dr. Dittmeier then reads):

"My early years growing up in Hong Kong, my Catholic faith, especially schooling with the Maryknoll sisters, and the example of several women in my life have been powerful influences throughout my life.

I was born in Hong Kong, in 1954. My parents were from southern China, Fujian, on the southern coast facing Taiwan, and had grown up there. They suffered through and were marked by the tumult of long years of war and finally came to Hong Kong as immigrants, bringing nothing with them, as they had to leave everything behind. Hong Kong was then an underdeveloped place, and I grew up with this initial awareness of its humble beginnings but above all witnessing and living Hong Kong's transformation into a prosperous and successful society.

My parents were very different. MY father was trained as a marine engineer and naval architect. His own family background was not strong or close: he was the purchased son of his father's third wife, and he spent much time alone, essentially raising himself. He was sent away to Hong Kong to a Catholic boarding school when he was nine years old. That is how he became a Catholic; his family was not Christian. He then went to school in Europe, in Scotland, in the years before the outbreak of the Second World War. My mother was from a very traditional Chinese family. She never went to school, as she was tutored at home. She never took an exam. Thus she was essentially raised in a greenhouse. She and my father were married neither of them knowing much of the other.

I was the fifth of their six children. I was the fourth daughter. They wanted, in the traditional Chinese way, at least two sons (an heir and a spare) and it took them six tries to achieve that. I am grateful, therefore, to my younger brother for not appearing sooner.

My father was Catholic but did not practice. However, he wanted his children to be raised in the Church. So we were all baptized, and every Sunday he would drive us to church and wait outside for us to come out. We were all enrolled in Catholic Schools."

Finally, by way of introduction, Carolyn was asked about the “transferrable qualities” of leadership—her insights training people for work in the world of business both at Purdue and at Notre Dame and how those skills translate to her new position as President and CEO at CRS. And this was her answer in an interview given to Forbes Magazine in March 2012.

“The main thing is something that any leader knows—you are part of a team. You have to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of everyone on that team, including your own, and make sure they are being used appropriately. Both organizations have deep similarities—they are full of very smart people, some of the best thinkers in their fields, but they are not engaged in an Ivory Tower enterprise. Both business and relief and development are ultimately very hands-on activities. You need to keep a balance between the intellectual and the practical.

Ultimately, good management practices transfer: How do you create an environment where people enjoy their work, where people are effective, where the work results in successful performance of organizations?”

Colleagues, I hope this material provides enough context for our discussion. And Dr. Woo, I hope we have done justice to your remarkable story.