Student Leadership Awards
April 23, 2013
Mt Aloysius College
Opening Remarks—President Tom Foley

Three quick quotes, three quick messages as we kick off this celebration of service.

First, Ben Franklin whose motto was “Well done is better than well said.”

This afternoon/evening, we thank you for your passion and for your collective will to prepare a hundred different activities on and off our campus. We celebrate and thank a hundred leaders today who understand what Franklin meant—it’s about getting the job done, not talking about it.

And I am amazed by the long list of “jobs” that you did on our campus and off our campus this year alone.

- Jobs like running blood drives in Cresson or rebuilding homes in New Orleans,
- Jobs like organizing craft nights and prom nights, coffee houses and pumpkin carvings,
- Jobs that involve all the weeks in MAC’s Got Talent, the Next Top Model (and let’s not forget “Humans vs. Zombies”),
- Jobs that range from preparing someone else’s taxes to preparing their food.

All important jobs and all done right and done well. So thank you for your passion and for understanding that Ben Franklin was right—“well done is much better than well said”!!

Second quote, Mother Teresa who said “Do not wait for leaders. Do it alone, person to person.” Many of you exemplify that in your daily lives, and we are grateful for your personal displays of compassion on and off this campus. I think it has something to do with the founding principles of mercy and justice, service and hospitality and with our mission statement about synthesizing “faith with learning” and combining “competence with compassion.” So many of you are examples of that part of our mission and we thank and celebrate you for doing the jobs alone sometimes, person to person.

Third quote, from Teddy Roosevelt who understood that we can’t all save the world—at least not every day—nor win famous battles like he did on more than a couple of occasions. He was once asked about the contrast between his larger than life accomplishments and “just plain, ordinary folks,”
Roosevelt’s response was characteristically terse and wise. He said that “you do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

Pretty good maxim, and pretty good description of what real leadership is—in the big disasters that I worked on with the Red Cross, in the little unsettling happenings that occur right next door. More people’s lives are changed every day because people “do what they can with what they have where they are”—than with all the big speeches and big ideas that you can fit in the NYT, the Congressional Record or any political party platform.

And it is so much simpler than it sounds with big words in a long speech. In the end, Teddy Roosevelt was right—it is all about doing “what you can with what you have where you are.” Whether you are here at Mt Aloysius or in the life in community that you will build when you leave here.

Thank you for the role you each play at Mt Aloysius in creating and nurturing this incubator for community by your actions this past academic year. I congratulate each and every one of you for your passion, for your compassion, and most of all for your contributions to our community here on the mountaintop.