Alumni Weekend Dinner  
October 4, 2014  
Keynote Address of President Tom Foley

Thank you, Jennifer. And thank you to all our staff who helped put this weekend together—from the Golden grads reception to the past, present future panel;, from the first All-Academy luncheon to the Mountie fireworks, from nature walks to campus tours to the ACWC. I am exhausted just reciting the list activities for which you all signed up!! I hope you found it interesting and even occasionally inspiring. Special thanks to our team here at the College who worked on all the fine points and gave up their weekends to be here with you.

Let me congratulate (the about to be anointed) distinguished and honorary alums who are with us tonight. This a special night for Michele and I because you have chosen to inaugurate two of our first friends here in Cresson—my first board chair Dan and our neighbor Marie—both now fast friends to both of us. In working with both of them these last four years, I can tell you one trait that they share—when they do something, they don’t stand around in line waiting for the credit. So it is especially nice that they will be inducted together.

Michele and I are honored to be in your company, Dan and Marie.

And special blessings on all the Sisters of Mercy who are here with us again this evening—despite ever dwindling numbers, they remain the heart and soul of Mount Aloysius, helping us to stay focused on the fundamental mission, to **synthesize faith with learning, to develop competence with compassion, to put talents and gifts at the service of others, and to begin to assume leadership in the world community.**” In practice, that means producing graduates who are job ready, technology ready and community ready—prepared to engage in the life of the community—wherever it is that their work and families take the

In Mary C. Sullivan’s edition of The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy, she opens her introduction with these four lines from Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney’s poem Sunlight:

> And here is love  
> Like a tinsmith’s  
> Scoop  
> Sunk past its gleam  
> In the meal bin
It is more than 160 years since that love—“like a tinsmith’s scoop sunk past its gleam in the meal bin”—first showed itself in the Southern Alleghenies, at the very moment when seven Sisters of Mercy welcomed 22 young girls to Saint Aloysius Academy. It is 116 years since the Main Building opened its doors as Mount Aloysius here in Cresson, over a 100 years since Charles Schwab financed the construction of Alumni Hall, and over 91 years since Pittsburgh architect John Theodore Comes drew up plans for the striking, Lombardy-Romanesque Chapel Building. I would describe all of that activity as the first metamorphosis of Mount Aloysius College, a time for planting both spiritual roots and red brick buildings.

It was 50 years ago now that the second metamorphosis took place, when the original McAuley Hall appeared as the first free standing structure on the campus, quickly followed by Ihmsen and the old original Cosgrave—all precipitated by the move from “academy” to “junior college” status.

And I feel that we are smack in the middle of the third metamorphosis at Mount Aloysius College—a free standing, comprehensive two and four year degree granting institution of higher education.

Jennifer asked me to give you an update of activity at the college in the midst of this third metamorphosis, and let me see if I can do that with some short videos.

❖ First, a look at this hall, past and present...
❖ Second, a look at the campus today, from a heavenly perspective...
❖ Third, here is what Mount Aloysius students sound like today...
❖ Fourth, this is what they looked like during the frenzy of Move-in-Day.
❖ And finally, this is what the campus sounded like two weeks ago, at Convocation.

You get the picture.

First, Mount Aloysius is a place of action. Certainly, by the numbers alone, your alma mater is a happening place. Let me give you some examples—

❖ On Curriculum, programs of study have grown to over 70.
❖ On Faculty, almost double the number of full time faculty holding doctorates.
❖ On Enrollment, up 25% in FTEs (in a period of declining enrollments nationwide) over the last decade; and a literal tripling of the residential population in the last ten years.
❖ On Student Life, over 100 separate programs—from a Canadian comedian to serious drama—in the spring semester alone.
The most recent entering class was:

- Our highest number of applications ever
- Our highest number of acceptances
- Our highest number of traditional aged students
- Tied for our highest number of students in residence on campus

That’s a lot of numbers, but they only begin to capture the highlights of all the action at the College. I hope you see what I mean when I say that Mount Aloysius is a place of action.

**Second, the sense of mission is alive and well at Mount Aloysius here.** 30 students went on out of state mission trips this year—to places like Guyana and New Orleans. They are in addition to the over 800 students who worked on 250 projects with 188 different local non-profit partners in just this academic year—building shelves at food banks, organizing blood drives, collecting hats and coats and shoes thru the winter—all for people who live within our fifty mile radius here and some for people as far away as Haiti and Honduras.

There is an infectious energy about this place—yes, 99% of our nursing students got good paying jobs last year and our NCLEX pass rate competes with any nursing class from here to Pittsburgh—but 100% of those students are not just job ready but they are community ready. That is the special magic of Mount Aloysius—our intent is not just to produce job ready graduates but community ready citizens—who understand that those to whom much is given much is expected.

So, your alma mater remains a place of action with a real sense of mission, and that’s not just our opinion. **Finally, I want you to know that the Mount Aloysius you attended remains a place where personal stories are nurtured and encouraged and preserved**—perhaps till they can be told at gatherings such as this one. Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Weisel likes to say that the universe is made up not of atoms but of stories. And in truth, it was not the “atoms” or the numbers in this case, that brought Michele and I to this part of Pennsylvania and to Mount Aloysius. It was the stories that brought us. And they happen every day here.

And we want to hear more of those stories from the Mount Aloysius of yesterday, today and tomorrow. We will need your help to tell those stories, as we prepare to embark on a new Campus Master Plan and a 10 year Strategic Plan that we will call Mount Aloysius 2025.

Last night, at the opening reception for the Golden Grads—the Class of 1964 here for their fiftieth reunion, I cited a famous writer who likes to say that and I am quoting—“we all write poems, it is simply that poets are the ones who write in words.” I hope that this weekend has allowed each one of you to write some poems and better yet to remember the ones you wrote 10, 20, 30 ,40 or even 50 years ago.

Poems about friendship and faith, poems about literature and landscapes, poems from the heart and poems about hope. And if by chance you wrote any of them down, send them to us. We’d love to add your own story to the Mount Aloysius collection.

Have a great night and enjoy the rest of this perfect weekend at your Mount Aloysius.