



office of the president

**Spring Honors Lecture
Introductory Remarks
President Tom Foley
Mount Aloysius College
May 1, 2014**

The Mount Aloysius theme this year is: *"21st Century Citizenship: The Common Good."* This charge asks us to think about the value of citizenship, the idea of a "common good," and the special challenges of the times in which we live, the 21st century.

This is not a new debate, just a perpetually unresolved one. It is a debate that began at least 2,000 years ago, when Greek thinkers first grappled with the conflict inherent in a vision of citizenship that sought to both protect individual rights and promote the common good.

Plato and Aristotle led the early debates, taken up in later centuries by Christian theologians like Augustine and Aquinas, Luther and Calvin. Thomas Aquinas felt that the biblical admonition to "love thy neighbor" was a guideline for governance as well as religion. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and others took up this debate between individual rights and state sovereignty. Terms like *laissez faire* and social contract competed for primacy in their writings.

Early American leaders were also attuned to these challenges. Ben Franklin in Philadelphia and Paul Revere in Boston each had a strong sense of civic duty, cast in terms of De Tocqueville's "greater good," and those two leaders personally pursued their belief by helping to build libraries, create public hospitals, fund mutual insurance companies, start volunteer fire departments, and found colleges, fraternal and even intellectual societies.

As Americans, we aspire to Supreme Court Justice Brandeis' claim that "the most important office in our democracy is that of private citizen." As Americans, we believe that citizenship is a higher calling (even if the percentage of us who vote doesn't always reflect that belief).

At Mount Aloysius, we have been engaging the topic with our community since day one this semester in "Connections" classes, at orientation and in seven all-college lectures like this one.

A quick summary of those major lectures:

- Judge David C. Klementik gave us a three part definition of citizenship at Convocation—“the personally responsible citizen; the participatory citizen; and the justice oriented citizen.”
- Vice President Biden’s longtime aid Terry Wright described a seamless citizenship “from the nation’s capital to the neighborhood.”
- Sister Marie Michele Donnelly, R.S.M., M.A. focused on the “spiritual journey to the common good”
- Sister Helen Marie, R.S.M., Ph.D. coordinated a faculty dialogue on the topic from the perspectives of four distinct faith traditions.
- Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America President Tony Ross talked about Dr. Martin Luther King’s notion of a more inclusive citizenship.
- Former President and ethics theologian Sister Mary Ann Dillon, R.S.M., Ph.D. argued that the common good and citizenship are fundamental tenets of Catholic Social Teaching.

Today, we will hear another perspective “*Citizenship in the 21st Century: A Global Perspective*,” from someone who certainly has the credentials to opine on the topic. To present those credentials, I am delighted to introduce Ireland’s Honorary Consul for Western Pennsylvania, and my friend, Mr. James J. Lamb.