

University Convocation

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John Carroll University

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It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Fall 2015 University Convocation. We know we have important work ahead of us this year, but we always do as we welcome our incoming freshmen and the rest of our students back for another academic year. We will do all of this as we live our newly articulated University Learning Goals of Intellect, Character, Leadership, and Service.

But before I proceed further, as is our practice, I would like to ask those who have joined John Carroll since last September to please stand and be recognized.

I want to do three things today. Introduce Provost Jeanne Colleran who will give you a campus update, then I will share some thoughts about what 'happens' to our typical Carroll student while they are with us, and finally end with an invitation for you to join us for the social. Jeanne will update you on 'three things' (in typical Jesuit fashion): Our Strategic Planning Process, preparation for HLC, and then she will

discuss our University Learning Goals. Following that, Jeanne will invite our new deans to share their thoughts about the year ahead with us. Please remember they have been here only a few weeks—please don't confuse them—Yes, Virginia, there are two Dolan Halls, for example. We will conclude, by giving you the opportunity to ask a question before we move on to our social. So let me ask Jeanne to come forward now.

(Remarks from Provost and Deans)

What Happens at Carroll

Today I am going to speak more personally than I often have in the past. I will share with you some of the things I have been thinking about and hearing from people—on our campus, or from alums or other Jesuit school colleagues.

We are not shy about our primary goal for our students. In fact, we are somewhat bold: we seek their **transformation**. Nearly every graduate of ours from the Class of 1943 to the Class of 2015, will say in one way or another that Carroll taught them how to learn and think and “transformed their lives.” It is no surprise then, that our very first

learning goal, we lead with this idea of a transforming our students--the way they think, study, and act.

University Learning Goal - Intellect

John Carroll students will be transformed by an integrative curriculum, in-depth study within their program of study, and applied learning to fully realize their potential to enrich the world.

First, and it is first for us, we wish to teach our students to think, to learn about themselves and the world around them through our integrative core curriculum, and to further train their minds through mastery of a major and perhaps a minor or two. Beyond this, we hope to assist our students in bringing the reflective analysis they have learned to focus first on their own lives and choices and then on to their local communities and the wider world through their careers, civic engagement, and life choices.

We hope to give our graduates not only information, but also a set of experiences which will empower them with a restless desire to be, and to do—to be men and women who build a better life, community, and world—*men and women for others.*

One such set of transformational experiences are the immersion trips we offer our students.

Commemorating the Churchwomen of El Salvador

Last November, along with the other 28 Jesuit schools in the U.S., we remembered the 25th Anniversary of the death of the Jesuit martyrs of the UCA, their cook and her daughter.

While I was there for the UCA Commemoration, I was able to visit the place, more than an hour out of San Salvador, where the bodies of the “four Churchwomen of El Salvador” who were murdered in 1980 were found. They have been extraordinary witnesses to the cause of justice and have left us a living legacy to follow.

Sister Dorothy Kazel was an Ursuline sister from Cleveland who took courses on our campus and was known to many. Jean Donovan was a lay missionary working with the Cleveland Diocesan Latin American Mission team, who together with Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford were abducted, interrogated, physically and sexually abused, and then shot by five national guardsmen. Two days later their bodies were discovered buried in a common, shallow grave marked with a

cross of two branches. December 2nd will be the 35th anniversary of their deaths.

Ursuline Sister Diane Pinchot shared these comments on this picture:

“This looks like the 20th Anniversary Pilgrimage picture. It was a trip with Ursuline and Maryknoll sisters and we all stopped to take the photo because the people of El Salvador had already enculturated the women in this image by changing both Jean's and Dorothy's blue eyes and blond hair to brown eyes and brown hair.”

I am delighted to share with you that John Carroll will join with the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland, Ursuline and Notre Dame Colleges to commemorate the living legacy of these women who gave their lives while serving the poor of El Salvador. I wish to thank Jeanne Colleran, Pam Mason, Ed Peck, and Anne McGinness, who have worked with our partners to celebrate the sacrifice and hopes of these women. They have made this fall semester one of remembering, learning, and working for justice—especially for the women of El Salvador.

We must remember, though, that their legacy is not just a call for justice in El Salvador but a call to justice everywhere. Our work for

justice is not only global, but it is local too, so I want to talk about Cleveland as well.

In recent years, we have made much progress in connecting Carroll to Cleveland. Our students', faculty, staff, and alumni engagement with Cleveland and our regions urban challenges has mushroomed out.

There is no denying that Cleveland has challenges: a history of segregated housing, racial divisions, a disproportionate rate of imprisonment for people of color, economic disinvestment, declining employment opportunities, and urban schools, which are the legacy of these challenges. Cleveland has made a lot of progress in the last 50 years, but I hope that we can help make Cleveland even better.

When I first came here 10 years ago, I constantly heard people talk about Carroll as that school for white, rich kids, in the suburbs. It seems we were perceived as privileged, disconnected, and indifferent to our region's needs.

Ten years later, we have much to celebrate: I never hear that old message around town now. Instead, I hear congratulations about the success we have had enrolling and graduating our students. I hear gratitude for the positive impact our students have on the nonprofits,

schools, and social services in the region. From our members of Congress to the many mayors in NE Ohio—all appreciate the progress we have made to attract, enroll, and graduate local students of color prepared for the next step in their lives: jobs, graduate school and professional training, and lives of service.

Almost all of those messages of gratitude then continue on to note the impact of our service learning programs and our graduates' contribution to the region. Many nonprofit organizations tell me they could not continue to serve without our students and the assistance of our faculty and staff—the Sight Center, Fatima Center, CHUH, CMSD, and the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center, to name just a few.

Nonetheless, our nation's large cities have serious challenges. We and our colleagues at other Jesuit schools, after having helped make progress in creating a more just society in our country over these decades, have been shocked at the tragic deaths of African Americans at the hands of police, and the violence that has often followed. Ferguson, New York, Baltimore, and on and on, and right here in Cleveland, too. This is not just someone else's problem. Like the El Salvadoran martyrs, their deaths and this injustice impacts our campus

too. Our students see it, feel it, and live with it. Can we help our city respond to today's challenges?

I believe we must help ensure that our students have the opportunity to engage the serious questions and conversations that will help strengthen the Cleveland community. We must talk about race, violence, justice, and policing. Will Cleveland go down the path of violence? Or could we help Cleveland find a different path toward a more just community? We must be thinking about our opportunity to both help change our cities and to prepare our students for their futures. How will we do that?

We have improved racial diversity in nearly every part of our campus community. We must continue to further diversify our student body and to progress in bringing people of color into our faculty and staff.

There are two motivations for our Jesuit Commitment to work for justice and peace, both are central to our community values and are one of our institutional strengths:

- We believe that there is a place in life for living a faith that does justice, and
- We have a commitment to serve the common good.

Val Lassiter was invariably hopeful and encouraging, but never in denial about the challenges on campus and beyond. Cleveland now has one less impatient but hopeful voice. I would never have imagined those two adjectives could be used about the same person until I got to know Val. Rest in peace, friend. Continue to remember and hope for us, Val. Feel free, Val, to tell Jesus what we need.

Let us take a moment of silence thanking God for Val's life and for his service with us.

In addition to our thinking and learning about our region's challenges, we must continually be looking for more effective service opportunities.

Service is at its best when it responds to the expressed needs of those with and for whom we work, in community. As the Center for Service and Social Action did last spring for the Jesuit Day of Service, we can engage our regional partners by asking them how we might be more effective, and how we might better collaborate with other organizations.

We have been asked by our Jesuit Superior General and our Provincial to partner with other Jesuit organizations. As we assess our service programs, we must allow the input from the local community to help direct our service efforts. I am sure we have engaged our local communities in our needs assessment activities. Could we engage that conversation now, more systematically and inclusively, more collaboratively across campus and with our local partners? Although we are not in a position to commit millions of dollars to transforming Cleveland, or even University Heights, we are in a position to do something meaningful and lasting. Ought we not begin to think about how John Carroll can be in greater solidarity with those who suffer injustice in our community and ask how our service might be more transformative? I would hope that we can and I believe that we must.

In his Santa Clara talk in October 2000, our former Jesuit Superior Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach, spoke about how our students might experience solidarity with others, especially those who suffer from injustice:

“Students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively.”

(Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Santa Clara University's Justice Conference, October 6, 2000)

The gritty reality of our world is right here in Cleveland. How can we not help our students to 'feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering and engage it constructively?'

Marie Giblin, former chair of the Theology department at Xavier University speaks very directly to how a person might grow in Solidarity:

“Solidarity includes compassion, but it is more. Solidarity is not only a spontaneous movement of the heart that responds immediately, but also a decision to take action to join with, to form community with, those who are suffering. Solidarity takes place when a person or community not only sees a need and acts, but commits to follow up, to endeavor to see that action is taken to improve the other's situation for the long run. Solidarity also includes a kind of mutuality that goes both ways in respect and accountability when the relationship grows. Solidarity becomes a two-way process because it becomes a relationship with both sides giving and receiving.”

- Marie J. Giblin

<http://predmore.blogspot.com/2015/07/spirituality-marie-j-giblin.html>

What do we need to do to help Carroll be more effective in our efforts to engage racial injustice in our region?

In the coming year, our Assistant Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, Dr. Terry Mills, will be working with leaders across campus to set new diversity hiring goals. I hope the Deans can lead a discussion with academic department chairs to identify steps forward and concrete iterative commitments which will build a more diverse faculty. Hiring international faculty is important as we need to be more global too, but it is not in itself adequate to realize the diverse community goal. I have asked our HR director to lead staff unit leaders across campus in a similar diversity discussion. Our campus must more closely resemble the region, as this is the “world” our students came from and the reality they will encounter when they leave us. You will soon hear more about a new diversity faculty fellowship proposal.

A more diverse community can be more effective in our conversation about racial justice. We can then engage Cleveland and beyond and make our commitment to justice for all more than words and ideals.

We know that talking about race is hard. Such conversations are fraught with risk. But we cannot leave such an important conversation to those whose political and power agenda are often self-serving. Every one of our students needs to be able to address the justice and value questions in their own lives.

This fall, the Mission Office will lead a collaborative University-wide effort to hold regular conversations in which we and our students discuss important contemporary issues such as those around race, gender, civility, politics, and relationship violence. We are calling them “Courageous Conversations,” and we expect they will be extensions of what our students are learning in the classroom. I hope you are able to join in these conversations.

While a more diverse learning community is one of our strategic goals, I know that this goal will never be ‘completed.’ Let us take this opportunity to get more engaged in conversation and learning, and in supporting our students, the community, and one another to grow our experience of and commitment to inclusive excellence.

As the psalmist prays, “***Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever.***” We really can’t wait forever! Can we be the difference we wish to see in our region? With your thoughtful efforts we can make a huge difference for our campus and for the region. Thank you.

Let us pause now and give you an opportunity to ask Jeanne, the deans, or me any question that you may have.

(Questions)

Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for the great service that you provide to our students. We can be proud of what we accomplish on our campus. We do teach our students to think and to serve. May this year be a time of grace and blessing for each of you and for our students. Thank you.