

PRESIDENT'S DINNER – NOVEMBER 13, 2010  
Remarks by Fr. Joseph L. Levesque, C.M., President

WELCOME TO ALL OF YOU! WHAT A GREAT NIGHT THIS IS FOR NIAGARA UNIVERSITY AND FOR THE WNY COMMUNITY. WE HAVE A WONDERFUL ATTENDANCE OF 551 PEOPLE, AND WE HAVE TAKEN IN OUR LARGEST GROSS REVENUE SINCE WE HAVE STARTED THE UNIVERSITY BALLS AND PRESIDENT'S DINNERS, THAT IS, WE HAVE BROUGHT IN TOGETHER OVER \$200,000 FOR EXTRA SCHOLARSHIP DOLLARS FOR OUR NEEDIEST STUDENTS.

I WANT TO RECOGNIZE AND THANK THE VINCENTIAN PRIESTS AND BROTHERS HERE TONIGHT, ESPECIALLY FR. MICHAEL CARROLL, C.M., PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR AND OUR VICE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO RECOGNIZE THE WOMEN RELIGIOUS AMONG US, LEADER-WOMEN WHO WERE HONORED EARLIER THIS YEAR BY THE DIOCESE OF BUFFALO, ESPECIALLY THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY AND THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF STELLA NIAGARA.

MY SPECIAL THANKS AS WELL TO PRESENT AND PAST MEMBERS OF THE NIAGARA BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND BOARD OF ADVISORS, WHOSE GUIDANCE HAS HELPED TO SHAPE MANY OF THE GREAT THINGS TAKING PLACE AT THE UNIVERSITY.

THANK YOU TO JEFFREY AND MAUREEN DANN FOR THE EXCELLENT JOB YOU'VE DONE IN CHAIRING THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENT'S DINNER. SPECIAL THANKS TO TONIGHT'S HONOREES – THE WILLIAMS AND GACIOCH FAMILIES; AND **TO ALL OF YOU** FOR BEING HERE FOR THIS EVENT THAT MEANS SO MUCH TO OUR STUDENTS.

MY FRIENDS, LET ME START BY USING THE TITLE OF A BOOK DESCRIBING THE LIFE OF THE ROOSEVELTS— “THIS IS NO ORDINARY TIME...” MY FRIENDS, THIS IS NO ORDINARY TIME. NOT FOR OUR NATION, AND CERTAINLY NOT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. THE ECONOMY IS STILL PROVING TO BE DIFFICULT FOR MANY, AND, AS A RESULT, MANY HAVE LOST HOPE.

DEMOGRAPHICS TELL US THAT THERE ARE FEWER STUDENTS IN THE POOL OF THOSE WHO ARE OF COLLEGE AGE THESE DAYS, AND THAT MOST OF THEM RESIDE IN THE SOUTH AND WEST.

THIS IS NO ORDINARY TIME, INDEED.

HOWEVER, WITH GOD'S BLESSINGS AND THE GOODNESS AND GENEROSITY OF A MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE, MANY OF WHOM ARE IN THIS ROOM TONIGHT, WE CAN HAPPILY SAY THAT THIS IS AN EXTRAORDINARY TIME FOR NIAGARA UNIVERSITY.

FOR STARTERS, OUR ENROLLMENT IS THE HIGHEST IT HAS EVER BEEN IN THE 155-YEAR-HISTORY OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY.

WE ARE OPTIMISTICALLY MOVING TOWARD THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF OUR \$80M CAPITAL CAMPAIGN. VERY SOON, WE WILL BREAK GROUND ON THE STATE-OF-THE-ART B. THOMAS GOLISANO CENTER FOR INTEGRATED SCIENCES.

I AM BOTH HUMBLD AND HONORED TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS GREAT INSTITUTION FOR 40 YEARS, INCLUDING THE LAST DECADE AS ITS PRESIDENT. MANY OF THE BEST MOMENTS OF MY LIFE HAVE TAKEN PLACE ON MONTEAGLE RIDGE AND I HOPE THERE WILL BE MANY MORE TO FOLLOW.

I AM ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL TO GOD, TO THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY FOR ITS HARD WORK AND SUPPORT, AND FOR DEAR FRIENDS SUCH AS THOSE WITH US TONIGHT. WE HAVE, TOGETHER AS A UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY, BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE MUCH. FOR THAT, AND FOR THE TRIBUTE THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME TONIGHT, I OFFER ALL OF YOU MY SINCERE THANKS.

WHEN I LOOK BACK AT MY INAUGURATION, I RECALL PLACING A MAJOR EMPHASIS ON INSTILLING VINCENTIAN VALUES INTO EVERYTHING THAT WE DO AS A UNIVERSITY. A DECADE LATER, I AM BOTH HAPPY AND THANKFUL FOR ACHIEVING THIS GOAL.

ONE OF THESE VINCENTIAN VALUES THAT I HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY PROUD OF IS OUR UNIVERSITY'S FOCUS ON COLLABORATION, AS OPPOSED TO COMPETITION. I WANT TO THANK MY TWO PRESIDENT-COLLEAGUES, DR. JIM KLYCZEK OF NCCC AND DR. DAN PATTERSON OF NIAGARA COLLEGE IN ONTARIO. THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO WORK TOGETHER....I WISH YOU CONTINUED SUCCESS WITH YOUR COLLEGES. MOVING FORWARD, NU PROMISES TO SUPPORT AND WORK WITH YOU WHENEVER THE OPPORTUNITY ARISES.

TONIGHT AS I VISUALIZE NIAGARA UNIVERSITY'S FUTURE, I HOPE TO COMMIT MYSELF AND THE UNIVERSITY TO THREE MAJOR PROJECTS:

1. WE WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CATHOLIC AND VINCENTIAN SPIRIT IS KNOWN AND LIVED BY EVERYONE AT NIAGARA UNIVERSITY. THIS IS NOT PROSELYTISM. THIS IS LIFE LIVED IN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH AND REASON, AND LOVE AND RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER, ESPECIALLY THE MOST NEEDY AMONG US. NIAGARA MUST ALWAYS INTEGRATE SERVICE OF THE POOR AS PART OF ITS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AND VISION. OUR STUDENTS MUST KNOW THIS AND LIVE THIS; AND THEY MUST PASS IT ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS THAT THEY WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO TEACH.
2. WE WILL ESTABLISH A CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS IN THE COMING YEAR. THIS WILL BE A PLACE WHERE ALL OUR OUTREACH EFFORTS TO THE WNY COMMUNITY WILL BE CENTRALIZED AND ORGANIZED.
3. WE WILL WORK WITH COLLEAGUES TO MAKE THE UNIVERSITY A UNIVERSITY OF EXCELLENCE IN EVERY WAY – INTELLECTUALLY, SPIRITUALLY, PERSONALLY, AND IN PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY.

## CONCLUSION

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR PRESENCE AND SUPPORT OF NIAGARA UNIVERSITY AND FOR ME AS PRESIDENT. THANK YOU FOR COMING TOGETHER TO APPLAUD OUR HONOREES. I ASK YOU TO WALK WITH ME INTO THE FUTURE AS STRONG COLLABORATORS. NIAGARA NEEDS YOU AND YOUR VISION, YOUR HOPE AND ASSISTANCE. AND WE ALL KNOW THAT IN THE CENTER OF OUR COLLABORATION WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT WE WILL FIND THE LORD, OUR TRUE STRENGTH AND HOPE.