

Father Maher's Message at the Announcement of a New Master's Degree Program in Family Nurse Practitioner

Feb. 13, 2024

St. Vincent de Paul, at the core of his works and his life, really was known as an exemplar organizer of charity in 17th century France, and that is the hallmark of any Vincentian work. Over a million people today in the world refer to themselves as Vincentian.

And there were three core elements to that organization of charity.

First, St. Vincent insisted that it must be impactful. It must change the lives of people. In fact, it must transform their lives, and through that transformation, they would come to know God.

Second, all works that refer to themselves as Vincentian must meet a standard of excellence, and it must be maintained. St. Vincent de Paul was a stickler on that. His biographers would note that he knew where every penny was in the ledger of all his works of charity.

And third, it must be sustainable. There must be an organizational structure in place, it must be funded and fundraised for, and it must be grounded in love. All these things create sustainability.

That's where we are today with the College of Nursing, under the leadership of Dr. Chris Verni, our dean, who joined us in 2021.

She set a plan with me and with Dr. Tim Ireland, our provost, and she formed it and shaped it in consultation in the context of shared governance, with great energy, with outstanding competence, and with great discipline through the twists and the turns and the vicissitudes of university life that all of us experience.

And she stayed focused and kept her eyes on the prize.

Today is another example of that elevation, of academic excellence, of student engagement, of community engagement, and of persistent high-performing outcomes.

And today, we put another building block in place in the College of Nursing. We build another layer to the house of nursing at Niagara University, thanks to Chris Verni, thanks to our team, thanks to our outstanding faculty in the College of Nursing, and to our provost, Dr. Timothy Ireland.

Thank you, Dr. Verni, for continuing to lead us forward with your persistence, your faith in Niagara, and your belief in the profession of nursing.

And finally, we don't rest today. We go forward. As St. Vincent de Paul would say, "When you see the outcome, brothers," he would say to the first priests and brothers of the congregation, "don't simply sprint out of breath, but walk with great intention, with care, and with passion toward that outcome."

And so, we continue to keep our eyes on the prize at nursing at Niagara University, to foster the vocation and the calling of those who seek to be nurses, to the profession of love and care, to the great need of the people of Western New York. People from rural communities, people from suburban communities, people from inner-city communities, all who need great care and good health.

And so, we pledge to move forward in partnership with our partners, teaching, serving, researching, to achieve even greater heights for our college, our university, and our community.

And that, my friends, is the power of Niagara University.