

## ***The Courage to Change: “From Grass to Grace”***

*Remarks to the New Students of Trinity in the College of Arts and Sciences  
August 27, 2012*

President Patricia McGuire  
Trinity Washington University

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Good morning and welcome to all new Trinity students! On behalf of the students, faculty, alumnae, trustees, Sisters of Notre Dame and large family of Trinity, I am so pleased to greet you, the latest witness to the wisdom of our founders in establishing Trinity 115 years ago. Special greetings to our freshwomen, a great Red Class, carrying the color of the very first class of Trinity Women who started the grand tradition of class colors in 1900.

My title this morning is ***The Courage to Change: From Grass to Grace*** --- those are words that some of you wrote, and in just a minute, you'll have a better understanding of the ways in which this moment represents change and real transformation in your lives.

Let me tell you a little bit about you:

You are new freshwomen and upperclass transfer students. You range in age from 17 to 40. Some of you have been married, some of you are mothers, some of you have raised other children even at very young ages.

52% of you are D.C. residents, with another 38% from Maryland, and you also hail from Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Ohio, Florida, Connecticut, Mississippi, Michigan, New Jersey, Nevada and Texas.

72% of you identify as African American and 16% as Hispanic.

Your religions include Catholic, Baptist and other Christian, Muslim and Hindu and others.

You come from 20 different countries --- Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, Bangladesh, El Salvador, Pakistan, Honduras, Haiti, New Guinea, Eritrea, Trinidad, Sudan, Senegal, Mexico, Jamaica, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Bolivia, and of course, the United States.

You speak 15 different languages including Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, Creole, Fante, French, English, Ibo, Portuguese, Melanesian, Krio, Spanish, Tirgrinya, Twi, Urdu.

If I call out for Brittany, Ashley, Diamond or Jasmin, a large number of you will stand up.

If this class were cooking up a big dinner and inviting special guests, we'd all want to be in on this guest list planned by students who answered the essay question about dinner guests:

Whitney Houston	The Dalai Lama	Michele Obama
Audrey Hepburn	Maya Angelou	Martha Stewart
Joan of Arc	Oprah	Phyllis Wheatley
Jim Henson	Rosa Parks	Susan B. Anthony
Steve Jobs	Martin Luther King, Jr.	Elizabeth Taylor
Herman Cain	Abraham Lincoln	Gandhi
Barack Obama	Malcolm X	Benjamin Franklin
Condoleezza Rice	Jesus Christ	Rosa Parks
Nelson Mandela	Dorothy Height	Mary McLeod Bethune
Hillary Clinton		

You want to study Nursing, Psychology, Biology, Criminal Justice, Education, Business and a long list of other majors.

You are military veterans, cheerleaders, soccer players, hospital volunteers, student government presidents, missionaries, drum majors, flute players and dancers.

Every year I read the admissions dossiers of our new students, including the essays you wrote when you applied to Trinity. It has become a tradition for me to take excerpts from those essays to illuminate the class profile with your real life stories. Since I have not had a chance to ask your permission to use your words, I am quoting you anonymously as I reflect your thoughts back to you as a class in contemplating the lives you will live from this day forward. *(All student essay quotations are in italics in this text.)*

You are coming to Trinity because you understand the power of change; you seek to transform your lives through education so that you can also change the lives of your children and families for the better, forever.

You already know about change; you wrote about change with passion and insight. This student provided a powerful image of growth and change that gave the title to my speech this morning. She describes the circumstances of her childhood:

*“As a little girl growing up in the small suburb of the BatiboVillage in Cameroon, my greatest dream and ambition was to educate myself so as to change my mother’s living conditions so as to build a home for her... My parents lived in a small little hut made of bamboo sticks and stanches from the palm tree. The door was the only vent through which air and smoke could come in and out. It had two small rooms and a kitchen that contained a bed for me and two of my siblings. The kitchen also served as a living room for our guests. As a result of sleeping in the kitchen, we inhaled smoke from cooking on a daily basis... The greatest nightmare was during the rainy season in which the house swayed from side to side during thunderstorms... Furthermore, the hut was muddy, no toileting system or closets... I told myself that with my first salary I would build my dear mother a house... A turning point in my life came when I had an opportunity to come to the United States. While in the states, working to save money was my main goal. Thus, in 2010, I realized the dream of building a modern home for my mother. She has been a very happy woman as she stepped from “Grass to Grace.””*

What a powerful image! In a large sense, each of you has this same aspiration to build new structures for your families, to establish lives for your children that will be more secure and ambitious than any prior generation. Each of us who has been among the first in our families to enter and complete college --- and that was true for me as well as many of you --- each of us embraces the idea of moving “from grass to grace” as we build new lives with the power of education at Trinity.

Change is not easy; change requires the courage to accept new ways of looking at, living in, being one with the many challenges of the world.

This student wrote about how a trip abroad to Punta Gorda in Belize introduced her to the idea of having the courage to create change:

*“By witnessing the Belizean life and interacting with the people, I became educated on the global issue of water scarcity and became motivated to create change...[she and her peers went to an English class in a remote village]...As I walked around to help the children with their lesson, something caught my eye. A little girl had a plastic water bottle filled with a cream colored liquid... my assumption was that she was drinking something along the lines of coconut milk... but the little girl replied plainly that the bottle was filled with water. I was completely stricken with the idea of this young girl having to drink that germ infested water...” [when she returned home she organized an educational campaign and raised money to donate to an organization that builds clean water wells in Belize]... I realize that I can make a difference in the world. I have never felt so blessed to have been given inspiration and courage to provide change...”*

**Many of you write with passion and deep love for the images of courageous change that your mothers have been in your lives:**

One student wrote:

*“My mother is a single mother with six children...Her courage and power of positive thinking and her dedication to her children and family have been just a few of our outstanding attributes that have influenced me....Her enthusiasm for life inspires me so much....”*

And another student wrote:

*“My grandmother always talked about how her mother became an entrepreneur during the sixties by starting her own business as a barber when all the other women at the beauty school were studying cosmetology. Her mother was very determined during a period in time when women in her environment in the Deep South could probably only work in someone’s kitchen... If these women in my family were at my dinner table I would hear so many stories of how they struggled at a time when women were not considered first class citizens. They met the challenges and survived the adversity with grace and dignity.”*

This student remembers watching her mother dress for graduation day...

*“That morning I awoke to my mother placing her gown on her back and cap on her head; she had the biggest smile I have ever seen on her face. Before the graduation ceremony she told me, “Go further than I’ve gone and become better than I am.” Seeing my mom graduate [from college] with her second degree at the age of 48 showed me that I could achieve any and every goal I set for myself...”*

Calling her mother her “Shero” she recalls her mother’s heroism in the face of many challenges:

*“I remember some of the sacrifices she made on my behalf and the great memories she created....When I was in elementary school every now and then my mother and I would eat by candlelight. She would set the table with our finest china and crystal and place the most elegant meal in front of me with a decadent dessert... She would light candles all around the house. It would smell of sweet apple pie and warm vanilla sugar. Little did I know that the reason for the dinner was because our electric had been turned off for nonpayment.... I always asked my mother why she sacrificed so much for me. She always answered the same way, ‘You belong to God who loaned you to me...’ I consider her to be the best example of a ‘virtuous woman’ (Proverbs 31:10-31)*

**Some of you are mothers yourself, and in the lives of your children you have found the courage to change yourselves:**

*“The birth of my son transformed my life in ways that I could never have anticipated... Last year I was captain of the cheerleading team and thinking more about my nail polish than my future. Now I am making concrete plans to build a lifetime career so that I can provide a safe and fruitful future for my son...”*

Another young mother wrote:

*“I refuse to be a failure or another statistic teen mom who dropped out of high school. I’m amazingly smart, independent, gifted and have a strong mentality. I want so much more in my life than what I have now. Having a baby will not stop me from following my dreams, instead it will push me forward... I’ll do whatever it takes to be successful and I’m taking my daughter every step of the way.”*

And another writes:

*“When I was pregnant my whole world changed. I had a little one who was about to come into the world...How was I going to teach my baby boy to become a man? [My son] motivates me every morning to go to school for a better education and to achieve higher. When I look at him, I see him doing better and achieving higher goals than me, but I am focused on setting a great example for him.”*

**Some of you have experienced change through working on service projects.**

As part of a project for a high school class, this student made a YouTube video on support for gay rights that received national recognition and even awards:

*“I strongly believe that one should stand up for what they believe in.... In our video, students and teachers stated their support for gay rights. People all over the world have seen our video... My involvement in this project is the start of a bigger change, not only in my school but globally. This experience showed me that one voice can rally many voices and with many voices comes change.”*

This student discovered change in herself by serving others:

*“I had gone to my church to volunteer to feed the homeless... When I got out of the van I could not believe what I saw. ... I never knew so many homeless people existed! Babies, toddlers, teenagers, adults and the elderly, you name it, I saw it. My heart went out to them as I saw how they struggled each and every day just to get something to eat and find somewhere warm to sleep.. From that day on, I honestly have a new outlook on life... I now realize how blessed I really am...”*

This student had a chance to do missionary work in Uganda as part of her church:

*“During the summer of 2010, I was privileged to become a missionary volunteer in Uganda.... I assisted numerous malnourished and abandoned babies...working with premature babies at Watoto stirred up my desire and passion to serve... I was influenced to pursue a career in neonatal nursing.”*

**Quite a few members of this class have experienced the life-changing journey of immigration from other lands:**

*“I was raised in El Salvador from the age of a year and a half to the age of ten. Spanish was my first language and when I came to live in the United States, I faced the biggest challenge of my life. Even though learning English was difficult for me, it opened my eyes to the power of having faith, dedication and determination.....Learning English has transformed my whole life...”*

This student describes her journey from Mexico...

*“Growing up in the outskirts of Sinaloa (Baja California, Mexico) was difficult. I lived in poverty with my siblings... We were raised by my aunt, my mother went to America when I was an infant... There were no electronics, streets, public bathrooms or luxuries. For entertainment we played yo-yo, hide-and-seek, climbed mango trees and rode horses. We helped our neighbors with their vegetable plantations and their cattle. ... [and then her mother called to say that she was bringing the children to America, and the journey began]... Crossing the Sonora desert was a very challenging task. The temperatures escalated past 100 degrees.. Our path was filled with barrel, saguaro, crimson hedgehog, the pancake prickly*

*pear cactus, and boojum trees. These images came and went as I progressed through the desert on the rack of my uncle's bicycle... After two exhausting weeks of traveling in the Sonora desert, we arrived in Phoenix... we took a taxi to a house and stayed there for three days. It was wonderful to have such luxuries: I ate, watched television, had a restful sleep and showered....This experience has changed my life completely in a way that has made me stronger, independent, responsible and determined."*

This student expresses keen awareness of how her American perspective influences her view of customs from her family's African nation:

*"Eritrea, a small country located in East Africa, is one of many African countries where customs and traditions are passed down from generation to generation. I was blessed to be born into an Eritrean family, although I was born and raised in the United States... Growing up was a bit challenging for me as I had to balance living in America and living in a strict traditional household ... Throughout my seventeen years of life, the most memorable obstacle I can remember, which has been shared with me from family members, is being able to break the cycle of female circumcision in my family. ... Although this practice is traditional in my country, I am grateful that I was not subjected to this procedure because I do not agree with it. I believe not abiding by the procedure has shaped me into the person I am today as well as become a voice of reason to others as to why it should not be practiced. I honor and respect my country and family; however, I do not concur with every aspect of the tradition that is practiced."*

When this student became an eyewitness to horrific tribal violence in her native Sierra Leone, she found her calling to become a nurse:

*"...the rebels attacked. Bullets were flying... there was wailing, crying, confusion... Many limbs were chopped off, pregnant women were held violently and were cut open to remove their babies, many suffered wounds from bullets... The air was filled with the stench of blood... Emergency treatment centers were open in all areas. Nurses, doctors and other paramedics were in high demand... they became the most important people and their services were most valuable at that time. The wounded, the amputated, raped and traumatized all needed the services of doctors and nurses. I happened to be at one of the medical centers with my aunt who is an anesthetic nurse... For the first time in my life, I was so emotionally touched and psychologically inspired and became convinced that indeed nursing is a noble career."*

### **Some have come to understand transformation in the crucible of violence, homelessness, drugs and abuse:**

This student described a childhood nightmare of abandonment, a mother's drug addiction, homelessness and eventual rescue:

*"Have you ever had a dream that was so bad and you tried to wake yourself, but the dream seemed to never end? Well that's the lifestyle for so long that I was accustomed to. Sometimes you see on television so many children living in poverty... This I know all too well. What is it like to be homeless and without food? This I do know all about. By the time I turned seven*

*years old I had experienced what most people twice my age have never been through, in and out of shelters, back and forth to multiple schools.... I have always been very smart. I remember hearing many stories from the time I was born about how I would always amount to something and how smart I was. With all the brains in the world, how could anyone amount to being something when something so great as your next meal is on your mind.... It is not easy growing up with a mother who has a serious drug addiction and a mental illness. ... no matter all the things I have been through, I will be successful!"*

And this student is not alone in suffering the effects of violence:

*"I was nine years old when my mother was gunned down and brutally murdered... I was forced to become a responsible and mature young woman before I was ready. Losing a parent at such a young age drastically impacted me. Although my mother's murder changed me forever, it helped me to develop the skills needed to overcome other obstacles... I am resilient...I decided not to walk around upset with the bad hand of cards I had been dealt. I kept a smile on my face because my mother would want me to do so. In the same way that I want to make my mother proud, I want to do the same for my grandmother who has raised me to be an intelligent young lady. I am courageous. I push myself to explore areas outside my comfort zone repeatedly and force myself to face new situations. After my mother died the naysayers didn't expect me to succeed, but I have proven them wrong by becoming an Honor Roll student. My mother was the first person in my family to attend college, but she was murdered before she could graduate. I pledge to finish the path that she never got the chance to finish."*

This student found life-changing courage in the face of abuse from her father:

*"I had to move out of my home due to an abusive relationship with my father. Not only was this physical abuse, but mental and emotional as well... My father always told me growing up that I was worthless and wouldn't ever amount to anything, which I believed for quite some time. However, when I finally got out of that unstable situation, I realized that he was terribly wrong, and that I have the potential to do and be whatever I set my goals toward. I have always had a passion to work with international development, and after my incident at home, I found my passion to work with human trafficking and women's rights in developing countries... After that incident, I have promised myself that I will never again let anyone tell me that I'm not capable of something..."*

This student suffered abuse and low expectations from her family:

*"Surviving domestic violence has impacted my life tremendously. When one undergoes a violent relationship with anyone feelings of guilt, shame and helplessness will bombard the mind. However, having the goal to pursue and become a nurse kept me from feelings of helplessness... The constant thoughts of my abuser conveying to me that 'You will never finish school or become a nurse' have made me even more determined to pursue my degree..."*

This student understands the importance of motivating herself to achieve more:

*“As I look around, I see a lot of problems in my community. I believe that everybody dies, but not everybody lives. I want to be able to give back to those who never got the chance to live... I’m going to strive to do my absolute best. Education is the key, and I’m determined to make it. ‘You won’t make it,’ so many people have made this statement to me. They say that because I am a teen mom. I had been told so many times that I will never graduate from high school, I started to believe it. There were so many times that I just wanted to give up... My son is my pride and joy. He inspires me to do more... I plan on doing everything that I can to be able to build us a better life.”*

**A number of you wrote about coping with illness and loss:**

This student suffered the loss of her mother from cancer:

*“When she passed I lived life as normally as I could, wanting to be strong for my family. I started high school doing my best .... I hit a breaking point... but with the help of my family I realized I would be failing her if I didn’t move forward in life... Even though my mom is no longer here, I know she’s always with me, sitting in the audience giving me a standing ovation.”*

This student offered reflections on her mother’s death and impact on her life:

*“There always comes a time in somebody’s life when something could go completely wrong. The heavy weights are on your shoulders and the sorry is lying on your back and doesn’t want to leave. That moment when you don’t know what’s next in your life, or when you feel like your world is ending...” [her mother] “She has made me the person I am to this present day...I never want to let her down, she wouldn’t want to see me fail. She wants me to succeed and thrive myself, so that’s what I do... Even though [she died] I promise you she didn’t leave my heart... She is here, guiding me to the finish line.”*

This student found a way to find some meaning in her older brother’s suicide, which she attributes in part to his failure to persist in education resulting in his inability to care for his family and children:

*“They say there are three types of people: those who watch bad things happen and don’t take life lessons away from them; those who contemplate why bad things are happening; and those who transform bad experiences into tools to change the world around them. ... I strive to be an advocate of change. Instead of watching our young people die, our people struggle without empowerment, our government make detrimental decisions, I want to be the person who forces change. I will instill in the young people of my generation and generations to come that it is important to receive and education and live your life in a fulfilling way in order to achieve success in its greatest form”*

**This student writes about how the experience of discrimination made her stronger:**

*“It was another day at work; I was taking orders and making sodas at McDonald’s. A customer walks in and asks me if I know how to speak English. I didn’t have my name tag on, so he called me Maria. The customer then rudely started judging me for being Hispanic. He continued to stereotype me as a Hispanic American girl who according to the world is just a minority who won’t make it far in life because he thinks I’m not smart enough...Before this incident I saw a mediocre lifestyle in my future, but now I dream big, and work hard to make my dreams reality. The best way to fight back is not by doing it physically... I fight back with intelligence. Without these types of issues happening I wouldn’t be the person I am today, because in order to have power, you must first sacrifice yourself. I was humiliated, and yet I still held my head high and looked forward. these are the moments that change the way you think of life...I want to become a leader in my community, and be strong and powerful. My success is not about me, but it also brings glory to my people... One day when I become an FBI agent, I’ll demonstrate to Latinos all over the world and to my self that we can be successful.”*

Here’s another tale of confronting discrimination: this student went with her mother and little sister to the auto insurance company. The student was speaking Spanish to her sister, but overheard the agent make disparaging stereotypical comments about her, but the mother did not understand all that the agent was saying. The student confronted the situation:

*“My mom’s agent thought that I was a high school dropout since I was there with my mom during school hours carrying a child. She must have thought that I was an illegal immigrant since I was talking to my sister in Spanish and my mom doesn’t understand English. She thought I was not smart enough [to meet the standard for a special insurance rate]. ...I went up to her and told her in English that I was done with my semester exams. I told her to give my mom [the application for the special rate] because she had the right like everyone else to fill out [the application]. I took pride in myself when I told her that I was a Latina, a high school senior, and ten months with my driver’s license....It frustrates me that people judge me because of how old I look, and infer that I am not smart because I am a Latina. Yet these stereotypes motivate me to prove these negative theories wrong and continue with my education to better myself and represent Latinas as fierce, smart and role models.”*

**Not all of the lessons of change come from adversity. Many of you have traveled abroad and have track records of achievement already:**

This student is a musician who was invited by the governor of her state to take a three-week tour of Europe with other student musicians. She recalls boarding her plane and waving goodbye to her mom who “.... wonders if she did the right thing sending me away to multiple countries at such an early age. When we landed in London I felt extremely jet lagged but the view of the horizon was to die for. Each day was calculated in a timely format that we vigorously had to abide by. Whether we were in Paris or Venice the schedule was enforced...I never complained and throughout the hustle and bustle I met some pretty amazing people... My ultimate favorite place to visit was Switzerland where we got a chance to hike up the Matterhorn.. One of the many things I took home with me was to be environmentally friendly...”

This student was part of a group of basketball players who went on a goodwill tour to China:

*“[in addition to playing basketball] ... there were numerous activities I did in China ... We hiked and picked up trash for two day sin QinLing mountain area. I worked with Hong Kong college students to teach English to the students at Huaikou High School....I hope that every child has an experience like this one...”*

This student won a Girl Scout Gold Award with an anti-bullying project, representing her school at the Global Young Leaders conference:

*“I had the opportunity to meet powerful and influential leaders from around the world... I met people who risked everything to fight for what they believed in such as battle line in war zones to save the lives of child soldiers in Africa.. I learned the politics of trade and settled disputes with two companies... I met people of different nationalities who enjoyed the same interests, the only thing that makes us different was our skin color.”*

This student had an unexpected life-changing musical challenge:

*“‘Would you like to try the flute?’ Who would have thought that those seven words would change my life forever? ..For the first time I understood two important things in life that would change my life forever. The first one is that music is life. Every rhythm, every beat, every dynamic affects a song, causes a feeling, adds a flavor, takes you away, changes your day. Every octave, every melody, every key change changes your view of the music and of life.. The second thing music has taught me is perseverance... Learning to play the flue taught me that if I want to do something big in life I have to keep trying until I make it my all and it’s the best I can do...”*

**For some of you, the inspiration to change and transform is in the biographies of great women:**

*“[Ruth Moore](#) was born in 1903 into a racist society. She was the first African American woman to achieve her Ph.D. in Natural Science despite the odds against her. She has inspired me because she made it clear that no matter the circumstances of things you can overcome and accomplish. I have been homeless the majority of my teen life but I refuse to be a product of my environment, just like Ruth.... When African American people were not allowed to learn, Moore was one of the few who did. I know that I was the first out my family to graduate high school with no kids. I am going to be the first to graduate college. My inspiration comes from Moore because she did it, so why I cannot do, do, be?”*

*“Condoleezza Rice throughout her life has taken education very seriously, studying late into the night and doing all her assignments and homework. This made her always have good grades and end with a doctorate degree. With her education she could perform her duties well as secretary of state. Her love for education makes me take my own education seriously. ... Condoleezza Rice’s love for education, her faith in religion and her loyalty to her family and society has influenced my life.”*

Some of those great women are your own mothers:

*“When my mom started college, she majored in biology because she wanted to become a doctor. However, because of the Civil War in Liberia (1889-1996) all the schools were closed. It was during that time that my mom started working with children and found that she loved it. After the war ended in 1996...she opened her own daycare in Liberia that became an elementary school. When we moved to America... she home schooled us. She was the best teacher I had... Perhaps more than anything else my mom has showed me that it is still possible to succeed at your dream no matter how old you are... My mom always led by example, instilling in her children the importance of always striving for knowledge and gaining wisdom at the same time.... It is because of my mom's steady hand in my life that my goal is to one day open schools for underprivileged children in third world countries. I want other children to get the same opportunity I had to get a good education and broaden their horizons.”*

You have big plans for your future:

This student plans to become a surgeon: *“I had the opportunity to experience the advancement [in medical techniques] when I joined the medical National Young Leaders Forum. During the program, I took a tour of a hospital and gained knowledge of triage specifications and diagnosing. The program gave me insight into the direction of the medical field moving into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...”*

Another wants to be a pediatrician: *“I want to become a pediatrician because I love helping children, and as I get older I want to do more to try and help them. More specifically I want to help children with learning and physical disabilities so I can make their lives easier.”*

On her dream... *“A seven year old girl with concerns and dreams told her parents one day that she wanted to be a pediatrician. From that day on she kept those words in her head. She created a dream and is holding on to it, not letting anyone bring her down.... being the first one in her family to graduate and actually finish college is the goal she wants to fulfill...”*

A psychologist: *“My future career aspiration is to become a child psychologist and to someday give children hope or may to just be someone to listen to what they have to say... Earning my degree will make me feel proud and even though many people in my family expected me to give up or not make it, I have. My degree will make me feel complete.”*

Lawyer: *“I will be the first [in my family] to go to college and I will make the difference and set an example for my younger sister... I want to be a lawyer because beyond getting the chance to be in a courtroom and talk all day I get to speak for victims and be their voice.... I want to be the person who gets them justice...”*

Entrepreneur: *“I plan to major in business with the study of management. After obtaining my business degree, I plan to go to grad school and get a degree in culinary arts. I want to become an entrepreneur and one day open my own restaurant. I will open up a restaurant that serves organic foods and healthy cuisines...”*

Surgeon: *“I want to become a cardiac surgeon.. I plan to major in biology with a concentration in pre-med. After that, I am going to attend medical school to work toward my goal of becoming a surgeon. This will be a long process, but I will stick with it.”*

This morning, you are taking one step closer to the fulfillment of these dreams. You will sign the Book of Honor confirming your commitment to live by the values and ideals of Trinity. You will receive your new student medals symbolizing your membership in the Trinity community. In stating the Honor Pledge, signing the Honor Book and wearing your Trinity medal, you are announcing to the world that you have the courage to change, to experience the transformative power of higher learning for the sake of your future and the generations you will influence far into the future. You will lead them “from grass to grace” with the power of your education here at Trinity.

And in doing all of this, you will give witness to the wisdom of the original women of courageous change at Trinity, the Sisters of Notre Dame who stood on this ground 115 years ago and pledged their entire lives, their small possessions, their enormous talents and their great faith to build a college that would transform the lives of women. They faced grave opposition, virulent prejudice, mindless sexism and even religious threats. But they persisted and prevailed. They were change agents at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, revolutionary women in whose shadow we sit today.

You, the Class of 2016 and the Trinity sisters who join you in other classes, you are their heirs, the latest examples of their wisdom, the tributes to their towering courage and conviction that nothing can hold women back from achieving the transformations we must make to improve the lives of our children and families, communities and nation.

As you begin what we all hope will be long and very successful careers as Trinity women, we pray that the inspiration of the Sisters of Notre Dame, the wisdom of our faculty, and the love of the Trinity will be with you every single day from this day forward. To paraphrase Gandhi, be that change you want to make in this world.

May you have the courage to change a little more for the better each day, growing “from grass to grace” through the power, wisdom and love present here, all through your Trinity days.

Welcome, Red Class of 2016 and all new students!