**Commencement 2013**

**Remarks for Senior Luncheon**

*May 17, 2013*

**President Patricia McGuire**

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Senior luncheon is my favorite event of the year, a time simply to enjoy each other’s company before the grand festivities of the weekend begin. I look around the room and realize how much you have grown, how much we have growth with you, and how much we will miss you. But I am confident that you will continue to grow and share your many gifts with the larger community, and the wonderful women you have become will be the pride of Trinity in all of the places you influence.

So many thanks.... Egochi, Katie, Morgan, Elle, Monique, Charity, Thamar, Lakia, Taylor, Sandra, Vanna, Brenna, Ellen, Ilza... so many other members of this class, I’ll be in trouble if I leave some names out, you have been a great class for Trinity through all of your years here.

You are women of high ambition, considerable resilience, and great passion for the large causes of our lives. You will be the great exemplars that future Trinity presidents who stand here on some bright May day in the years to come will extol to future generations of Trinity students about to graduate. That’s the hope and the promise of this senior luncheon, as it has been down through the years. We are already looking at posterity, and it gives us confidence and comfort.

We need your hope and promise so much right now, my soon-to-be-alumnae-sisters in the Class of 2013. We need your talent, your compassion, your strong and clear voices advocating for improvement in a society that has so many challenges.

We live in a time of corrosive political discourse, unimaginable violence and the unforgiving vengeance it fosters. More than 4,000 people have died by gun violence in this nation since the Newtown school shootings, and yet, Congress cannot act on reasonable gun safety measures. Political farces, scandals and tragedies --- the Benghazi investigation, the IRS mess, the incomprehensible AP news sideshow --- distract us from the utterly serious issues of this historic time. Whether Boston or Bangladesh, Syria or southeast DC, we need to refocus our political will and intellectual energy on finding solutions to large social problems.

Made bold by Trinity’s mission, let’s be the voices that offer hope, peace and reconciliation to our weary and battered and angry national psyche.

In every moment of community and national crisis, let’s remember what Trinity really calls us to do: to be present to suffering in ways that bring healing; to address wrongdoing in ways that are rational, not making things even worse with misplaced vengeance; most important, to be among the leaders working with others of like mind to construct effective responses to the intractable modern dysfunctions that shred our social fabric.

We are the heirs of the great revolutions in civil rights, women’s rights, human rights --- but we can never take those rights for granted.

50 years ago, in April 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King wrote in his famous Letter from a Birmingham Jail that, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” He was explaining why he felt it was an essentially moral imperative to disturb the peace in Birmingham where racial segregation persisted in the face of nonviolent efforts to promote integration. He was criticized by a group of white ministers for upsetting people on the way to achieving the goal of a more equal and just city. His reply is a passionate defense of activism in the face of prejudice, discrimination and oppression.

With the power and imperatives of your Trinity degrees, you will be leaders to advance the cause of justice for new generations. You must be willing to disturb the peace, to be, like Dr. King, the outsiders who go inside to confront racism, sexism, oppression in all of its ugly manifestations.

By the Year 2050, this nation will no longer have a single racial majority. Already, the national birthrate for Hispanic, African American and Asian babies accounts for more than half of the children born in this nation. These children are driving rapid demographic change in all levels of education. By 2020, the population of Hispanic students in higher education will increase by 42%, African Americans 25%, Asians 20%, while white students will increase by only 4%.

This inevitable demographic paradigm shift already places great demands on national, state and local leadership to make the right choices about everything from access to education and healthcare to workforce development and job opportunities to care for the rapidly expanding elderly population to the quality of the nation’s infrastructure to policies in law enforcement and national security for the most diverse nation in human history.

Across the generations, Trinity graduates have responded to these challenges with the confidence that comes from a great education and the conviction that comes from deeply ingrained values. Whether leading the Congress of the United States, setting national healthcare policy, advising the president, working for nuclear nonproliferation, administering justice on the benches of federal and local courts, advocating for migrant farmworkers, healing the sick, teaching rising generations, creating works of art and literature for others to enjoy, planning campaigns, coordinating newscasts, balancing budgets, organizing neighborhood committees, raising children and caring for large extended families, Trinity graduates carry with them the characteristics of *alma mater*: keen intelligence, deep integrity, and the passion for action for social justice that is our special heritage from the Sisters of Notre Dame. The great Trinity Alumnae Association continues to nurture these values in our graduates well beyond commencement day.

116 years ago, a visionary group of religious women saw a grave injustice in this city. Women who desired a higher education were barred from admission at the new Catholic university in 1897. Believing that women had just as much right to go to college as men in that day, they moved not only a good deal of earth but even a little bit of heaven to create Trinity College. Those great Sisters of Notre Dame could not have imagined this campus today, and yet, if they were here right now, they would take so much delight in you, the Class of 2013. They are here in their great spirit and legacy of justice, honor and faith. You are the latest witness to the wisdom of their courageous work.

As you prepare to step forward from this commencement weekend: may the strength of the Trinity be with you through your most challenging days, giving you the power and fortitude to persist in doing what is right and just for your communities; may the wisdom of the Trinity help you to make the best possible choices in your professional and personal lives; may you live each day with the light of Trinity, a beacon of hope, a reminder of the friendship, care and love that is always here for you no matter how far you roam.

Congratulations, Blue Class of 2013!