



COLLEGE OF MOUNT SAINT VINCENT

Annual Scholarship Tribute Dinner 2016

Remarks by President Charles L. Flynn, Jr.

Mr. Gabr, Dr. Newman, Sisters of Charity, students, colleagues, friends, Trustees, welcome to this celebration.

In the United States today, colleges and universities are subject to intense criticism and pressure. Much of that criticism is distorted, ill-informed, or misleading. At worst, it is flagrantly indifferent to the truth and hostile to democracy.

One criticism is particularly frustrating: the criticism that too many people are going to college. Critics do not say that their own children should dis-enroll. They suggest that other people's children are not equal to the opportunity. The assumption is obvious. Children of families with modest means should stay where they are.

Only education can turn talent into opportunity.

Too many Americans are going to college? Really? Across the globe, the United States now ranks 19th in college graduation rates.

The number one reason Americans do not graduate from college? They can't afford it.

Against this backdrop, a recent federal study identified **ONLY** five colleges and universities in the United States that have both a mission-centered record of socio-economic inclusivity **AND** a demonstrated record of extraordinary student success.

Think about that. Only 5. Five in the whole country.

Five is a national embarrassment. Five means a Nation at Risk.

But, think about this, too. The College of Mount Saint Vincent is one of those five. Socioeconomic inclusivity **AND** extraordinary student success.

We are an institution not only committed to the American Dream, we are living it.

That is a source of Mount Saint Vincent identity and pride.

Mount Saint Vincent serves students of great talent without regard to family circumstance, students from Park Avenue to the Bronx, from Mamaroneck to Indiana, from Los Angeles to Brooklyn.

Your support of this dinner helps to make that mission possible.

The College has this mission because of our founders, The Sisters of Charity of New York. For two hundred years, these magnificent, selfless women have committed their lives to the service of others.

Tonight, therefore, I should comment on faith.

Someone with no connection to the College asked a question that they called obvious.

They asked why a college in the Catholic tradition is honoring a woman who is Jewish and a man who is Muslim?

The question wasn't intended to be offensive. The person was just surprised.

But for me, the question was arresting.

No one connected to the College has asked such a question. People connected to the College know the answer.

Like our Sisters of Charity, the College is committed to three fundamental values:

1st An understanding of our common humanity: an understanding that every human being is equal—every human being is a creature of God.

2nd A commitment to human dignity: every human being is of equal worth, every human being is precious—we are all called called to offer the best of ourselves and to ask the best of others

3rd A full appreciation of our obligations to each other: we all make our way in life together—we all are all called not only to serve ourselves but also to serve each other.

The College honors people whose lives and work are an expression of that faith.
The College honors people who seek understanding, people whose lives and work express the respect and hope that is the light of the world.

Tonight, in Shafik Gabr and Pamela Newman, we celebrate two remarkable people who fit that bill, two people whose lives and work express the core commitments of the College.

The College is proud of its work, proud of its faith, and proud to honor these two great servants of the common good.

On behalf of the College of Mount Saint Vincent, I thank them. I thank you all.