



COLLEGE OF MOUNT SAINT VINCENT

Address. Dinner. 2018

Hello. I'm Charles Flynn, President of the College of Mount Saint Vincent.

This dinner is the College's signature fundraising event each year.

My thanks to our honorees Dolly Lenz and Steve Menzies for their help.

And my especial thanks to Pamela Newman and Stephen Acunto, for their extraordinary efforts behalf of the College—efforts that made tonight's success possible.

We are very proud of this College.

Since its founding by the Sisters of Charity, a Mount Saint Vincent education has been grounded in three abiding values:

1st We foster an understanding of our common humanity:

That means an understanding of our equality. Every human being is a child of God.

Every gender, every sex, every ethnicity and race, citizen and non-citizen, *every* religion and those with no religion at all—no exception.

2nd We foster a commitment to human dignity:

A deep understanding that every person is precious in the eyes of God and should be in ours.

3rd. A full recognition of our obligations to each other.

That every person is precious. We are put on earth, not alone but together. We serve God through the ways in which we serve one another.

These commitments are fundamental to the big-armed faith of the College.

These commitments also have a secular expression in this country's founding documents.

We hold these truths to be self-evident—that we are all created equal, that we each are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights, and that to secure those rights, ensure justice, provide for the common defense, and promote the general welfare, we created and empowered our government.

Because Mount Saint Vincent takes those radical commitments seriously, we are an American

Dream institution. Our commitment is to serve students of every background without regard to family means. Regrettably, we are an outlier.

That is not good. Education is very expensive. With median family income in the US equal to less than \$60,000, even the children of upper middle class families need substantial help to put higher education within reach. Many colleges and universities—public and independent--have not responded well. Public and independent colleges and universities are increasingly class stratified. Children of those of greatest means are now overwhelmingly enrolled in the richest institutions. Children of those of the fewest means are increasingly concentrated in institutions that offer pseudo credentials and inferior futures.

This pattern evolved over the past 40 years. It is new. It violates the founding ideals of this country. And it is dangerous for democracy.

Against this backdrop, Mount Saint Vincent is an increasingly extraordinary and important institution.

We are among the most inclusive (democratic) colleges and universities in the United States, public and private combined. Academic quality is something real. Our faculty is exceptional, committed, hard-working, and dedicated. They give life to the American dream. As Steve Menzies pointed out, national studies have identified Mount Saint Vincent graduates as having the 3rd highest rate of upward mobility among students from all of the independent colleges and universities in the United States.

Our commitment to financial aid makes this mission possible. We are an outlier.

It sounds as though I'm saying the future of American democracy depends on Mount Saint Vincent. I am.

Only education can turn talent into opportunity. In a free society, education should not serve only to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful. Only when opportunity is real can democracy flourish.

Mount Saint Vincent does not prepare students to be subordinate. We prepare them to be free and responsible adults ready for personal accomplishment and ready to serve the common good. We prepare them to be citizens not subjects. You can meet them tonight. And I challenge anyone not to be in awe. They are talented. They accomplish great things. They are kind.

So I am here to thank you for helping to make our work possible.

