



# Office of the President

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I really believe that I have been blessed to be born in this great country, to have grown up in a wonderful loving family, to have served our country in uniform, and to have married such an awesome woman. Donna and I have also been blessed with three great children who followed us into West Point and the Army. Our daughter, Cory is an engineer captain completing her master's degree in environmental engineering and will soon join the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY. Danny is a lieutenant Blackhawk helicopter pilot in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, and Zach is a senior cadet at West Point who will be an infantry lieutenant after graduation next month.

I would like to thank the leaders of the Society for allowing me the honor and privilege to speak with you for a few minutes. I also want to thank Mount student, Tahlia Francis, for her wonderful rendition of the Star Spangled Banner; wasn't she terrific?!

Donna and I both grew up in strong Catholic families. I was an altar boy and I am sure Donna would have been if girls were allowed to back then! In fact, Donna wrote to Cardinal Cook asking to be an altar server, and his response was that she could carry the Cross but not serve on the altar. If you know Donna, you know that she did not particularly like the Cardinal's response! Despite this, Donna went to Catholic schools until she entered West Point, while I was fortunate to attend Don Bosco Prep, a Salesian order high school before entering the Academy. At West Point as cadets, we were both Sunday school teachers, Eucharistic ministers and were involved in a retreat program called Teens Encounter Christ.

So I feel I had a solid Catholic foundation heading into the Army, and I'd like to share a few thoughts about how I believe my faith was challenged but also strengthened through service in uniform. The Army can be a lonely place to be at times. The typical Soldier moves frequently, and is often away from family and friends. I found this to be the case, however I also quickly discovered that I always felt at home in Church, during the Mass, regardless of where the Mass was celebrated. I have attended Mass in remote locations around the world, sometimes with a rifle slung over my back in the woods. I felt at home in Mass whether in an elaborate Cathedral in Europe or in a tent in the desert in Iraq. I remember attending a high Mass said in Italian with lots of incense in of all places, Sarajevo, Bosnia on a NATO base we shared with many nations. So in some of my loneliest times, attending Mass was like being home because our Savior and the Great Friend to all, our Lord Jesus Christ, was present in the Eucharist.

One of the great things about being in the Army is the personal fulfillment received from serving. One of my most memorable tours of duty in terms of service connected to faith was in 1987-88 on a months-long construction mission in



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Honduras as part of a 1,000 service-member task force. A couple of stories from this deployment really stick with me today. First, I went down early as part of a small team to negotiate for use of the pasture land on which we would build our temporary basecamp. We went to the small home, made of mud brick of the woman who owned the land in the town of San Lorenzo. I remember sitting in her small living area and seeing displayed most prominently and reverently on the wall a crucifix and a picture of President John F. Kennedy; the significant combination of religious faith, and hope in the US as a bastion of freedom really stuck with me. The woman graciously agreed to the monetary terms for us to use her land, although I am not quite sure she fully understand that hundreds of paratroopers would be falling from the sky a month later and landing in her pasture!

Being stationed at Fort Bragg, NC at the time, my unit's preferred mode of travel was by one-way trip exiting with parachutes from perfectly good airplanes. For my first parachute jump into Honduras, I had the honor of carrying a ciborium of consecrated hosts. I know this sounds weird and may make His Eminence and others at least a bit uncomfortable so let me explain. Our unit Chaplain was a Baptist who knew I was a Eucharistic Minister, and who also knew we were going to a very remote location with little chance of getting a priest to visit our basecamp weekly. So he conferred with Catholic Chaplains at Fort Bragg who said I could take a ciborium of consecrated hosts to conduct a prayer and Eucharistic service for Catholic Soldiers on Sundays. However, I had to keep the ciborium properly secured at all times. So given our mode of travel, I put the ciborium in a padded case in my pants cargo pocket on the right side, I believe. The only thing I could think of upon jumping from the door of the C-141 cargo plane was I hope I land on my left side! After landing and getting set up in the basecamp, trust me I found more secure means to store the ciborium! I tell you this story because I don't know if I ever felt closer to God and the Catholic faith in my life then in those Eucharistic services in a pasture in San Lorenzo, Honduras helping Soldiers far away from home partake in the Eucharist.

While in Honduras, our unit performed humanitarian and civic action projects in addition to our major airfield and road construction projects. One Sunday afternoon, I headed to the orphanage in San Lorenzo to visit with the woman who ran it about our ongoing project. When I got there I was surprised to find several Soldiers working, surprised because we worked 6 ½ days a week and Sunday afternoons and evenings were the only down time for the troops. The Soldiers told me they did not finish the work they had promised would be done that week and were committed to getting it done for the children. That lesson really sticks with me today. These were Soldiers who on their precious little time off were working to help improve the living conditions of the children in this dirt poor town. This is the type of selfless service done by our military members worldwide that few ever hear about. Those Soldiers were heroes in my eyes, and more importantly in the eyes of those orphans.



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So as I was retiring from the Army, I was looking to continue to serve society in some way. After reflecting on my work experience and more importantly on the values I was fortunate to witness while growing up and in the Army, working in Catholic higher education seemed to be a good fit. Soon after that brilliant flash of the obvious came to me, I had a chance encounter with Ambassador Jim Nicholson of all things at a parade at West Point (we love our parades at West Point). He introduced me to his wife Suzanne, who was on the board at Mount St. Mary's University at the time, and the rest is history so to speak.

Speaking of history that was one of the things that attracted me to the Mount. We've been around since 1808 and names like Dubois, Brute and Hughes are synonymous with the establishment of the Catholic Church in the early years of our nation's history. Many from our seminary followed them, holding high religious offices in the Catholic Church. Our service today to the Catholic Church and her people is one of the things I truly value about serving at the Mount.

I am also inspired by what I see as a calling now to help students prepare to lead and serve others through obtaining a values-based education. Within the past year, we purposefully changed our university mission statement to be: As a Catholic University, Mount St. Mary's graduates ethical leaders who are inspired by a passion for learning and lead lives of significance in service to God and others.

We seek to develop students to be the ethical leaders of tomorrow, something our nation and world needs now. They will be ready to make a difference in the world, to boldly live significantly. I can't adequately express to you how impressed I am by our students when I see their commitment to preparing to lead lives of significance. I see many of our undergraduate students at the Mount in the classrooms, on the sports fields while also working in campus service jobs to help pay for their education. I remember visiting our satellite campus in Frederick, Maryland last summer and watching Darrell who came to night class in his mechanic's overalls wiping grease from his hands. These are the students who inspire me and make me realize that I found the right path post-Army for my lifelong faith journey.

So please come visit our beautiful campus. Two Saints and one martyr have walked our grounds. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton lived on the grounds of our university before starting a school with her Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg. St. Theresa of Calcutta visited the Mount twice. And of course, Blessed Fr. Stanley Rother, Seminary Class of 1963 was beatified in September as the first US-born martyr for giving up his life while serving his flock in Guatemala. Hundreds of thousands of people visit our National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes each year in devotion to the Blessed Mother. I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk to you tonight about my faith journey and how I am still charting it now at Mount St. Mary's University. I have truly been blessed in so many ways. Thank you!