

Graduate School of Management **COMMENCEMENT**

April 23, 2010

Keynote Speaker
President Thomas W. Keefe

Provost Berry, Dean Franklin, Trustee Maher, Father Olson, members of the faculty, parents and friends of the graduates, but , most importantly, ladies and gentlemen who are soon to be graduates of the University of Dallas Graduate School of Management – good evening and thank you for this honor.

What do we know about today's graduating class? We know that there are 95 graduates; 37 of them are from 16 different foreign countries – countries such as Belarus, Belize, China, Columbia, Ethiopia, France, Ghana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Peru, and Thailand. Sixty-four graduates are from Texas, and nine are from out of state – California, Oklahoma, Michigan, Louisiana, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Their ages range from 21 to 67 and 18 are reported Catholics.

What could such a diverse set of individuals have in common? One word: courage. Winston Churchill defines courage as, "Going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm." Courage because you came back to school. It takes courage to travel to a foreign country and pursue an advanced degree in an area where you may not have friends, contacts, or even speak English as your first language. It takes courage to return to school after decades in the workplace. It takes courage as a 21 year old to participate in a class with seasoned professionals. In a day and age when life-long service to one corporation or organization is a thing of the past, in a day and age when volatility is the norm for investments, in a day and age when the real estate market – the bedrock of every American investment plan for generations – is suffering its steepest decline in my lifetime; you have one commodity in which you can safely invest and are guaranteed a generous return – yourself. Belief in yourself and the courage to invest in yourself is the key to your success.

This ceremony is a recognition and celebration of your achievements. But it is more than that. It is a statement of belief in your value as a quality professional and in your investment of time, money, and the patience of your friends and relatives. It is a statement of belief in yourself and in your confidence in your future. The degree you receive today is certainly no guarantee of success in the future. Your current employment status is certainly no guarantee of success in the future. Money in the bank is no guarantee of success in the

future. The one guarantee of success in the future is your continued confidence in yourself and your willingness to take risks and understand that your future is in your hands.

Pope John XXIII, one of the great individuals of my lifetime, stated, "Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do." I am proud of you as scholars because the path you pursued is a challenging one. Most of you were required to work while you pursued your degree. Some of you completed part of it online and part of it in the classroom. Some of you started as a distance learner and came to the University to complete your degree. Each one of you crafted your own path. Each one of you refused to quit.

I know that each and every one of you sees this as the culmination of a life-long dream. But, as I noted before, it is not the end, it is merely the continuation of your commitment to your belief in yourself. It is that self-confidence and that persistence that has allowed you to succeed where others have fallen by the wayside and failed.

The sword that I hold here today is emblematic of what we hope to achieve through our students at the University of Dallas. This sword is formed of the finest steel, fashioned from the finest combination of metals, steel that has been forged in a furnace, extraordinarily hot, shaped on the anvil and ultimately, becomes a tool of considerable strength and power. We consider the formation of students, both graduate and undergraduate, at the University of Dallas to be somewhat akin to the formation of this sword. A combination of the finest raw materials tempered in the fire of the classroom and formed on the anvil by the dedicated faculty. It is my role as President and Dr. Berry's role as Provost to make sure that you are not struck too hard, too often, or too prematurely by the faculty as they are forming you on the anvil. A sword struck too early damages the metal. A sword struck too often and too hard will shatter the steel in the formation process. It is our responsibility to make sure that you are struck only the appropriate amount of times and with the appropriate strength. But in the end, you have emerged as a formidable tool, strong and sharp.

But the question that we ask all University of Dallas graduates is, "What do you intend to do with the sword?" A sword that is acquired after a prolonged struggle and then discarded to rust is a waste. A sword that is fashioned strong and true and used only for self gratification and personal enrichment is a waste and a shame. But a sword that is used to serve others and to achieve the betterment of your fellow citizens is the purpose of the swords we fashion here at the University. We expect each and every one of you, those who will return to your home countries, those who will return to your home states, those who will remain here in Texas, to emerge as leaders, with a set of values and principles that this country so desperately needs. You have earned your degree through your time, through your tuition, and, yes, with the patience of your family and friends. But you have also earned a great responsibility, a responsibility to take what you have learned and the values and principles that you have embraced and to use your skills, your talents, your education to lead the country and the world to a better place.

In closing, I will observe that you are but a continuation of what has made this country great – the spirit of entrepreneurship, fierce determination, and self confidence in the face of adversity. I believe Carl Sandberg said it best in his poem the *Prayers of Steel*:

“Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a crowbar.
Let me pry loose old walls.
Let me lift and loosen old foundations.
Lay me on an anvil, O God.
Beat me and hammer me into a steel spike.
Drive me into the girders that hold a skyscraper together.
Take red-hot rivets and fasten me into the central girders.
Let me be the great nail holding a skyscraper through blue nights into white stars.”

Thank you for your time and attention.