Good Morning,

Dr. Rose M. Patten Chancellor of the University of Toronto

Very Rev Fr Erik Oland, S.J., Chancellor of Regis College and vice chancellor of its Ecclesiastical Faculties;

Rev Fr Thomas Worcester, President of Regis College

Rev Fr Michael Rosinski, Rector of the Regis Jesuit Community

Sr. Susan Wood, Academic Dean of Regis College

Members of Faculty, Administration and Staff, Students and Alumnae and Alumni

*Dear Graduates of the Class of 2020,

On behalf of the Governing Council and the Board of Governors, I am happy to congratulate you on the completion of your studies and the conferral of your degrees. I would like to share with you a few observations as you set out on your respective journeys.

 "True education, education really worthy of the name, is an organized effort to help people use their hearts, heads and hands to contribute to the well-being of all of human society."

You have no doubt recognized the words of the Very Rev. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach at the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the birth of St Francis Xavier. In a period in our history when scientific discoveries and the devices we have ourselves designed seem capable of overwhelming us, he reminds us that education is about human beings in relation to others, to a community. We have a

purpose in life. It is to do our best, each one, individually, to contribute to the common good, the well-being of everyone in society. We know this intellectually and academically but what matters is to make it real and recognizable to others through the way we live. This is particularly important for you who are in the field of education and ministry as moral teachings are credible only as far as they are applied in reality by those who preach them. **The quotation continues**:

"There are no neutral sciences, no pure academic disciplines that develop isolated from human problems in an ivory tower. Every branch of human knowledge raises questions today about meaning, ethical behavior, and moral responsibilities."

Meaning, ethical behaviour and moral responsibilities: these are concepts that are challenging because we know that they are not always understood in the same way across generations even in one single family, let alone across different cultures. It seems that even 'common sense' no longer has a consensual meaning in a given environment.

This has practical consequences particularly in an environment that is simultaneously multi-confessional and secularized as we see in many parts of the world. If there is one obvious fact highlighted by the current pandemic, it is that coping with global afflictions requires concerted efforts leaving no one behind. The urgency to come to a shared understanding to move forward is clear.

It seems to me that working for the common good and for the integral development of each human being calls for an extra dimension to the traditional method of application of Catholic social teaching.

I believe that this is what Pope Francis may be telling us through his two most recent encyclicals *Laudato Si'* and *Tutti Fratelli.* Michael Cardinal Czerny succinctly describes the first as 'Everything is related' and as 'Everyone is related' for *Tutti Fratelli.*

The action mode of Catholic social thought as you well know is 'see, judge, act'. If I were to adapt this method to new realities, I would take my cue from *Tutti Fratelli.* In particular, I am struck by the several references to the *Declaration on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* that the Pope signed in Abu Dhabi with the Grand Imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar in February 2019. His opening to the Sunni world is remarkable and necessary given the coexistence of Christians and Muslims in many countries.

As a diplomat I can relate to the Pope's constant admonition: Listen. True openness can make us really uncomfortable – it is easier to stay in the company of our 'certainties'. The assumption here of course is that one is well grounded in one's mission. This is what provides us with the quiet assurance that allows us to engage in dialogue without fear of losing something. That allows us to identify personal biases and identify assumptions to be challenged. Stepping out of our comfort zone may let us see people and their gifts in a new light.

The dimension that I would add to the modus operandi of Catholic social thought is that of the 'other': See – becomes Listen to the

other; Judge – examine together with the other; Act – act with the other in mind. This is not easy in practice but I believe making the effort to involve others on the basis of equal respect is indispensable.

It is a challenge because we seem to be tempted to close in on ourselves. Here are two symptoms: the erosion of the sense of individual responsibility for the wider community and a corresponding distortion of the meaning of respect that seems now to apply primarily to one's individual rights. These symptoms point to the loss of understanding and acceptance of the intrinsic worth of each human being. It is noticeable that the expression "human dignity" around which all societies should flourish is hardly ever used on its own in public discourse. It is nearly always accompanied by a qualifier as in *dignity and worth* or *dignity and autonomy.*

We live in dynamic worlds! The cosmos is not static, it is expanding; cyber space affects the way the human mind thinks. As never before, we need to be equipped with more than knowledge to make sense of what is happening all around us and to preserve our full human identity. You are called to help those you will encounter to succeed in this.

 Dear Graduates, It is now your responsibility to grow the gifts received at Regis College the better to share this treasure. In the Ignatian tradition you have been formed at Regis to be men and women for others, so go and set the world on fire! And also in the spirit of St Ignatius in whatever you do now and in the future,

remember the poor, the neediest, and the forgotten ones on the periphery of society.

Thank you.