

NEWS RELEASE

PHOTOS ATTACHED

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Fall Convocation Marks 'Official' Start of University of Saint Mary Academic Year

(Leavenworth, Kan.)—On the third anniversary of the death of Sister Mary Janet McGilley, president of Saint Mary for 25 years, the University of Saint Mary community gathered to celebrate life, commit to upcoming challenges, during Fall Convocation Sept. 13.

A Saint Mary tradition for decades, Fall Convocation combines Mass of the Holy Spirit with a celebration to officially start the academic year. It is also a time for dedication—a dedication to the challenges and obstacles that lay ahead for students, faculty and staff alike. The ceremony was held inside Annunciation Chapel on campus.

“In honor of Sister Mary Janet McGilley, a true leader, who served as President for Saint Mary for 25 years, we dedicate this celebration today,” said Sister Diane Steele, University of Saint Mary President. “We gather today to look forward to the future—the future potential you will all strive to achieve.”

As is the tradition for Fall Convocation, key addresses were made; however, this year was slightly different. Traditionally, a tenured professor makes the key note address. In the true spirit of community, instead of one key note speaker, three key note speakers, one professor, staff member, and student addressed this year’s audience. For the three, Sister Susan Chase, biology professor, Rob Miller, athletic director, and Candace Hermreck, senior student and class president, the theme for each was community.

Chase addressed the audience first. A Saint Mary alumna and biology professor for more than 30 years at USM, Chase said she has seen her fair share of changes at Saint Mary. But in all, the one thing that remains constant is dedication to others.

“While the mission of Saint Mary has changed over the years, the core values that we espouse remain very much the same – we state that we value community, respect, justice, and excellence,” she said. “So we invite you today to become Saint Marians, to enter wholeheartedly into the daily grind, the nitty-gritty stuff of life, the challenges, joys, successes, and the frustrations and disappointments of life – the hard work necessary to gain the knowledge and skills the academic excellence that prepares you for a worthwhile career.”

Athletic Director and Head Baseball Coach Rob Miller took a different approach. In the true spirit of his coaching style and philosophy, Miller emphasized the importance of unity. Unity, he said, breeds success.

“We use many words to describe our approach to teaching and learning. My favorites are: Trust, Respect, Commitment, and Perseverance,” he said. “Another term I use is synergism. My definition of synergism is two plus two equals five. We can accomplish more than what we are supposed to if we work together. That is what makes Saint Mary what it is and that’s what makes Saint Mary, in my mind, the place to be.”

Senior class president Candace Hermreck added that without the close-knit Saint Mary community, she wonders what her education would have been like.

“At Saint Mary, ‘community’ is everything. It’s on the field, in the dining hall, or in the dorms. It can be heard by laughter in the classroom or by a friendly hello in the halls. Either way it is in this community that we are best set up to learn and grow,” she said.

Following the addresses, Steele charged the students, faculty, and staff to dedicate themselves to succeed for the academic year. Vice President and Academic Dean, Sandra VanHoose led the dedications for the faculty, Director of Admissions Jessica Goffinet led the dedications for staff, and Taylor Gillespie, senior Student Government president, led the dedications for the students.

The University of Saint Mary is a private, co-educational applied liberal arts university founded by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. The University of Saint Mary is located at 4100 South 4th Street, Leavenworth, Kan., with additional locations at 11413 Pflumm in Overland Park and inside Providence Medical Center at 8929 Parallel Parkway in Kansas City, Kan.

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