

Inauguration of Dr. Cindy Gnadinger at St. Catharine College October 23, 2015

Get wisdom at the cost of all you have. Let her place on your head a graceful diadem; a glorious crown. Wisdom's way is a straightforward path, and you are on it.

Cindy, all of us here today, and most definitely all of your Dominican Sisters and Associates of Peace, bless you and surround you with our love and prayers. We have confidence in you.

God has called you to this ministry, and gifted you personally with all you need to advance the mission of St. Catharine College.

You stand in a long line of courageous Dominican women. And their spirit, like a mantle, rests on your shoulders today. We recall Prioresses Angela Sansbury, Magdalen Edelen, Agnes Hunt among the earliest, and the countless Sisters who have graced these grounds since 1822. They transmit to you through us, their successors, our pioneering spirit which includes the ability to see potential and possibility no matter how great the trials.

You follow in their footsteps. And you bring with you to this campus an enthusiastic, infectious, "can do" attitude; an inclusive approach to leadership—leadership that empowers others, and that is 'results' driven. You also bring keen intuition and flexibility which distinguish you as a leader and will allow you to guide St. Catharine College into the future.

As you likely know, back in January 1904, a fire left our beloved St. Catharine's in ruin. As Sr. Paschala Noonan in our history writes, "With the sisters scattered, the students dispersed and residents living in cramped, unsuitable conditions, the future seemed bleak." (p. 141 Signadou) But, there was hope. With undaunted faith in the power of Christ and his resurrection, we were determined to forge ahead. And as a sign we should take heart, not be afraid, and go forward no matter how adverse the conditions, the JONQUILS, or as we say here in Kentucky, the MARCH LILLIES, "...raised their golden heads all over the desolate valley." Sr. Paschala continues..." Jonquils are hardy, not hothouse plants requiring delicate care like orchids. They persevere and spread out. Wild and survivors, they became for us a symbol of hope..." a symbol to all of us who are ourselves, as you have probably noticed, "beautiful each in our own way, hardy, a bit wild and definitely survivors!"

As you get to know us better you will see that this commitment to life is in our DNA—it's what led us to become Dominican Sisters and Associates of Peace; it's what inspired us in our response to the devastation of Katrina. It's what compels us now to live our Chapter Commitments:

- promoting peace, nonviolence, unity in diversity and reconciliation
- promoting justice for the marginalized and transformation of oppressive systems
- promoting welcoming communities on our campuses and sharing our preaching mission with our students

and for

- promoting Care of Creation and the reduction of the impact of global climate change

This is the Congregation that stands with you now, and we beg God grant you courage, vision and much JOY in your journey.

It's really not about you or any of us, Cindy, but about the lives that will be touched and transformed at St. Catharine College because of the empowerment they experience here.

You, your faculty, staff, our trustees, are all God's instruments of love and mercy. You especially are invited today, along with the academic hood you so proudly wear, to put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love and above all else, the PEACE OF CHRIST. God has called you to this ministry, Cindy, and God will give you the grace to accomplish great things in God's name.

Life plays out in ways we cannot always anticipate, but you go forward today committed to doing your very best each day—and as scripture says, "...whatever you do, in word or in deed," do it "...in the name of our Lord Jesus."

This is the 800th year of the founding of the Dominican Order. It is no accident that you begin your tenure as President of St. Catharine College during this auspicious anniversary. Three symbols from the very beginning of the Order capture our Dominican identity and I would add a fourth. Let me share them with you in story form.

I invite you all now to close your eyes so you may see what I am saying in your minds' eye. This is an ancient account that goes back 800 years telling of a deep experience in prayer that St. Dominic had. The principle characters in this memory are Sts. Peter, Paul and Dominic de Guzman. But today you too are in the story, Cindy, and so are we—your Dominican Sisters and Associates of Peace. This is the account handed down generation after generation with just a little adaptation.

See now in your mind St. Dominic praying. He is at St. Peter's in Rome. Mystically he sees the Apostles Peter and Paul approaching him. In my version today, Cindy, you also are present standing with Dominic. And we, your Dominican Sisters and Associates, are right there as well standing with the Apostles. We like they have something in our hands.

Peter approaches, and he gives Dominic a walking STICK, Paul advances and gives Dominic the BOOK of the GOSPELS. While these are given to Dominic they are clearly meant for both of you. A Sister now steps forward and hands you something— Can you guess what it is? It is golden and hardy, and beautiful--a bouquet of JONQUILS—Then you with Dominic hear Paul say what Dominic heard so clearly from Paul's mouth 800 years ago, "Go, and Preach, because you have been chosen by God for this ministry!"

Sr. Pat Twohill, OP
Prioress