

AQUINAS COLLEGE

October 7, 2022

Remarks from Alicia Córdoba, D.M.A. at her inauguration as the 9th President of Aquinas College

Thank you all so very much for being here today. It is an honor to stand before you as the ninth president of Aquinas College.

Little did I know that all of the beloved family trips to the Warren Dunes, or when taking my daughter to Blue Lake camp that one day, I would take the road to Grand Rapids to be with and lead the Aquinas College family, the destination of my now current life, work and vocation. God is truly great --- and mysterious.

With all humility, I believe God has been preparing me to serve you. At various points throughout my career, my mentors, friends and family would point to my abilities to organize, bring people together, to have a vision and make it a reality, and most importantly my desire to serve others in order to help them make their own hopes and dreams come true.

Despite and/or in addition to these skills, as you all by now know, I have a passion for music. I simply love to perform. It is the voice by which I have communicated the inner depths of my being for over fifty years. It is also the means by which I garnered my entrepreneurial spirit. My oboe often was my ticket to pay for school; to buy my next meal; to pay the rent; to travel the world; to teach; and to learn how to lead. God has graced me with the gift of music while showing me the pathway to my true vocation in Catholic higher education.

Graced by the gift to serve three Catholic institutions with different founding congregations and thus charisms for the Benedictines, the Marianists and now the Dominicans, I have learned the glory and fullness of living a Christian life, is a life of the mind, of prayer, and of study best lived and shared in community. In fact, it was St. Hildegard von Bingen, a 12th century Benedictine abbess who epitomizes for me the beauty of Catholicism as it is reflected through the wholeness of one's being. She was a writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, medical writer

and practitioner. She was mentor, confidant, and advisor to religious and secular leaders while establishing numerous abbeys and monasteries through Germany. She was a model of what the liberal arts mixed with professional skills and a great deal of fortitude and faith can accomplish. And she did all of it as a woman during the High Middle Ages. She taught me not to fear dreaming, to believe in the vision, and to keep my eyes and ears open to the calling of the Lord.

I have followed her lead and that of the other great leaders (including and especially my parents). Through their guidance, belief in me, and my own faith in God's support, I am here with you today, as your faithful and humble servant. As an Aquinas student said, "This is God's place." On the day of the announcement of my presidency, Sr. Aquinas waited until almost everyone had left the room to ask me a simple question. "Do you feel it?" Oh yes, I do "The Spirit is here with Aquinas and with you today. She was referring to the Holy Spirit whose presence was so strong that day. That feeling has not diminished and I pray it never does.

Students, if I can give you any advice, it is to believe in yourself. I believe in you. And periodically as you walk across campus on your way to class or to practice, look into the trees, listen to the wind, notice the colors and remember to thank God. I thank God for you.

Yesterday I was at a Blessing of the Hands Ceremony for our nursing students. It was beautiful and holy. As part of the service the sophomore students read an oath of commitment written by Sister Linda Thiel. With all of you present here, I would like to commit myself to you, as your president, to serve you with compassion and humility, to listen to you and bring joy, to value you and your work, and to work for and with you to make Aquinas College the premier Catholic college in the Midwest and beyond.

Lastly, I would like to publicly devote myself and my presidency to the Blessed Mother of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In so doing, I would like to read a poem I wrote about her while at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar, La Nuestra Señora del Pilar. I will read it twice, once in Spanish, its original language and then in English. While I do so, I ask that you pray for Aquinas College, and for our students, faculty, staff, administration, and Board of Trustees. And please pray for me and my leadership, so that I may remain faithful to the needs of the institution and fullness of its mission.

"LA VIRGIN de Pilar"

Eres pequeño pero fuerte
Cuando la veas sabes

La bella que viene de ella
No es su joeria, su oro y plata
Es de un cariño que yo he visto antes.
Ella tiene poderosa de amor para
El Dios, su Hijo y para nosotros
Tanto amor
Mucho amor por sus hijos del mundo
No necesitamos estar solos
Porque ell siempre esta con nosotros
Vamos a darle todo que podemos
Porque ella es la madre,
La madre de nosotros,
de todo el mundo.

Con rezas puras y reales a ella,
Podemos tener un mundo beunisimo
Un mundo con cariño
Un mundo con paz
A nuestra madre, La Virgin de Pilar,
Nos te damos gracias por
Todo lo que hace por nosotros
Corazones llenos de amor.
A tu Hijo, por nosotros
preguntale por favor, darnos
sus regalos del Espiritu Santo
para vivir una vida Buena
y una vida para ti.

La madre pequeño, La Virgin
de Pilar, vaya con nosotros
y gracias por todo.

“The Virgin of the Pillar”

You are small but strong.
When you see her you know
The beauty that comes from her
Is not from her jewels, her gold and silver
It is from an affection that I have seen before.
She has power of love for God, her Son and for us
So much love

Much love for her children of the world
It is not necessary for us to be alone
Because she is always with us
We give her everything that we can
Because she is the mother,
Our mother, the mother of everyone.

With pure and real prayers to her,
We can have a great world
A world of affection
A world with peace

To our mother, The Virgin of the Pillar,
We give you thanks for
All that you do for us
Hearts full of love.
To your Son, for us
please ask Him a question,
to give us
His gifts of the Holy Spirit
to live a good life and a life for you.

The small mother, the Virgin of the Pillar,
go with us and thank you for everything.

Thank you and God bless you for all you do, all you have done and all you will do
for Aquinas and for me.