

Seattle University
President's Welcome
Friday September 21, 2018
Reflection by Mary Kay Brennan

The Lights and Shadows of Our Time: Finding Courage and Renewed Hope for Prophetic Audacity

Hello Community~

Welcome to academic year 2018-19 and a heartfelt welcome to Provost Martin.

I want to begin by acknowledging that I am an occupier of and benefit from settler colonized lands, taken from the indigenous tribes in and around Puget Sound.

My identity affords me an intersectional space to be an insider with privileges and outsider within our setting.

At times, though likely not often enough, I call on upon my inner courage for “prophetic audacity”¹, channeled to voice truth to power; leveraging the bits of capital I have, *hoping my contract is renewed*.

It is in this context that I come before you as a member of our community humbled to offer a reflection for you to consider.

I invite you to examine silently alongside me and hold in tension the lights and shadows in these challenging times and be open to call forth the thoughts of what moves us forward in our worlds with *hope renewed*.

I encourage you to relax into your chair, silence the noise in your head and outside of you grounded in this moment....

Please take a moment now to consider the things that are life giving, creates new inspiration, restores your balance, and reminds you to be your best self, ...

(Pause – 30 seconds)

A few of mine are:

- Grounds & landscaping teams for our beautiful environment

¹ “To Have Courage and Prophetic Audacity: Dialogue of Pope Francis with the Jesuits gathered in the 36th General Congregation, October 24, 2016. Retrieved from <https://jesuits.org>

- Our thoughtful textbook manager – William Cannon
- My social work colleagues who are challenging me to grow into anti-oppressive practice
- Programming by Vice President Natasha Martin and the Institute for Catholic Thought and Culture
- My Jesuit colleagues
- Marie Peterson and Facilities staff – coordinating moves and helping many of us resettle
- Kate Elias, and the Orientation Advisors and all the custodial staff who got our dorms ready for move-in this weekend
- Academic specialists –especially Cham Nguyen, and folks in the Registrar’s office including Andrew Anderson
- Elizabeth Seymore – Service Learning Manager at the Center for Community Engagement
- Dan Scheid – providing academic support for our athletes

Now consider what prompts immense sorrow and emptiness, desolation

(Pause ~30 seconds)

For me...

- The unfathomable newly disclosed depth of the clergy abuse scandal reported in Pennsylvania, signaling more yet to be exposed across our nation.
- And the institutional church’s deliberate cover-up, providing a stunning example of the traumatic and catastrophic results when power ascribed by position and gender in this case “*clericalism*” exists in a closed system, is unaccountable, and insulated from societal input and laws, and women’s voices.
- The treatment of persons experiencing and reporting sexual assault and harassment. Understanding that the experiential memory is forever seared in the blur of time and place.

Locally and here on Campus:

- GLBTQ community – seeking to be recognized and afforded just rights
- The inequitable use and invisibility of the NNT faculty labor force,
- Invisible structural barriers for our POC colleagues and others marginalized by their social identities and statuses.
- Economic and cost of living challenges for employees and our students
- Shared governance and budget transparency -the shadow of a closed system

In the coming weeks, as we hold these examples of light and shadows in the challenges of our times, where does your hope for the future lie? What is your role as a change agent to make manifest a more just institution through structural change ?

(Pause)

May you experience many life giving moments in this year and be an advocate for justice.

Blessings and my warmest regards for the academic year.