On rare occasions, the Regis University Board of Trustees authorizes the awarding of honorary degrees to individuals who have led lives of distinguished service and professional achievement. Today, we honor an accomplished academic and administrator who readily meets those standards. I am pleased to ask Dr. Mary McFarland to join me at the podium.

Imagine with me for a moment a refugee camp in Northern Kenya, 9,000 miles from where we sit today. It is home to over 200,000 men, women and children who have lost everything fleeing war in South Sudan, Somalia and other countries. It is 110 degrees. It hasn’t rained for months.

Now imagine with me, in the midst of that camp, a computer center operated by a small Jesuit organization called Jesuit Worldwide Learning.

Sitting at computers day and night, adult students study online, write papers, and engage in chatroom discussions. Guess what? They, like you, are Regis University students. Through Jesuit Worldwide Learning these students complete a 45-credit Regis University diploma in liberal arts. While only a portion of a college degree, this learning opens doors for advancement in the refugee camps. And, for the lucky ones, earning this diploma gives them a ticket out of those camps to universities in other parts of the world.

Jesuit Worldwide Learning – Regis University students – are found in refugee camps in Kenya, Malawi, Northern Iraq, Burma, Afghanistan and more.

We have the honor today of awarding an honorary degree to the woman who is the founding International Director of Jesuit Worldwide Learning – Dr. Mary McFarland. Until last year, Dr. McFarland traveled tirelessly to build Jesuit Worldwide Learning from one camp to nine, overcoming unimaginable odds. Her hallmark was the refusal to take no for an answer. As a result, she has given hope to those who so easily could have given up hope. Dr. McFarland embodies what Jesuit education is all about – to use our minds and hearts to change the world one student at a time.

Dr. McFarland has led an accomplished career as Dean and Professor at Gonzaga University School of Professional Studies prior to her work with Jesuit Worldwide Learning. At Gonzaga, she was a pioneer in online learning, collaborating with other Jesuit universities like Regis who were innovators. She was also Chair and Professor at Gonzaga in the Department of Nursing. Dr. McFarland was an Executive Nurse Fellow at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
Dr. McFarland has served since 2005 as a Director on the Board of the Regence BlueShield of Idaho and she is an Accreditation Evaluator for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and for the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges.

- Dr. McFarland earned a Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Leadership from Gonzaga University;
- A Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Portland; and
- A Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Nursing from the University of Iowa.

Dr. McFarland has spoken often, most recently she presented “Voices of Faith” at the Vatican and she gave a TED talk at Georgetown University. Her last publication were on Servant Leadership and on Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins.

Dr. McFarland is a friend to Regis University, the Jesuit higher education community and thousands of students and faculty across the world.

In recognition of her character, her many accomplishments, and her life of service, the Board of Trustees of Regis University, by virtue of the authority vested in it, does hereby confer on Dr. Mary McFarland, the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, with all the rights, privileges and honors thereunto appertaining. In testimony thereof, we have affixed our signatures to this document and have certified it with the University seal. Conferred at Regis University, Denver, Colorado, in the month of December in the year of our Lord, two-thousand and seventeen.

(Father Fitzgibbons & Larry Luchini OR Barth Witham hood Dr. McFarland and present award to congratulate her)

And now we have the honor of hearing from Dr. McFarland. Will you join me in welcoming her?