From the Office of the President
John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

Commencement Speech for
Jesuit Worldwide Learning Diploma Graduates
Kakuma Camp, Kenya
July 16, 2018

Welcome to the UNHCR Kakuma Team, members of Jesuit Worldwide Learning, Jesuit Refugee Service, and family and friends of our graduates.

First and foremost, I offer my congratulations to you graduates and acknowledge your families and friends for their part in supporting you in the accomplishments we celebrate today. You have made many and profound sacrifices for this education; family, friends, and professors have done the same for you.

So, in addition, I want to express my admiration and appreciation for the faculty and staff here and around the world who have helped you graduates come to this moment.

Finally, to the graduates, you have accomplished something marvelous; you have changed your lives for the better and, honestly, you have changed the world for the better. Please allow me to explain. I beg you, do not let the brevity of these words distract you from the import and the magnitude of what you have accomplished.

You have engaged in a pioneering and prophetic kind of education; your education here has been an encounter with some of the best thinking about literature, history, religious thought, and meaning the world has to offer. You have engaged in intercultural and international society building. You have put rigorous thinking behind the human experience and human wisdom you have brought to the classroom. Finally, you have added to the wisdom of this very large and diverse community. I speak not only of the community called Kakuma Camp but of the Regis University students and faculty in Denver, CO, and educators and scholars around the world. Over 200 Jesuit university and college presidents met only days ago in part to consider how to grow and expand and deepen his kind of pioneering and prophetic education.

You are now part of a much bigger family, the family of those who are Jesuit educated.

Pioneers, like prophets, have always had a dual role. On the one hand, they articulate the real presence of the Divine, the Holy One, in our midst. Even as they teach us to wait for the totality of the fulfillment of that presence. Pioneers and prophets open new horizons, expand knowledge, and share wisdom.
Yet, on the other hand, pioneers and prophets have the noble, if unenviable role of unmasking the false narratives, bogus dichotomies, and the idols of our time. They always challenge the false gods any culture conjures.

The gift of your university education is, then, what it has been since the beginning: to unmask fear and render it powerless; to deconstruct false gods that entrap people. You have joined the community of learned persons but as with all prophets and pioneers, the education you have acquired is not simply for you. It is for you but it is for this community as well. This community needs you; the world community needs you.

And so, it is my happy yet solemn duty to charge you graduates with the responsibility to promote depth of thought and imagination rather than settling for mediocrity; to share in the common responsibility for the welfare of the world by engaging challenges with critical intelligence; and finally, to minister to all by committing to being a life-long learner and never settling because there is always more to learn and share.

Congratulations, graduates! Welcome to the Alumni Association of Regis University!