



From the Office of the President

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REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

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I thought I'd begin with a story. This past September I had an opportunity to visit the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northwest Kenya. The camp is home to 200,000 people, nearly all of whom are refugees from Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Congo, Eritrea, Rwanda and Burundi.

Regis is collaborating with Jesuit organizations there to bring college education to refugees and I was invited to speak to the most recent graduating class. The graduates couldn't have been more gracious - women and men, Muslims and Christians, married and single - all were moved that these were their days, that their graduation day was here.

In many conversations with those students, it became clear how profoundly grateful they were for their education. The better life that higher education brings in terms of reflection, empowerment, and honed intellectual skills; the experience of growing into leadership for the local refugee community in all of its diversity and multiple needs; the drive to make the world a more humane and just place, especially their own home countries - these are the outcomes of the Regis education I saw over and over in Kakuma Camp. And it got me thinking. Those students, more than 8,000 miles away and living in incredibly difficult conditions, believe it or not, have more in common with you than you might think.

Here's why - each of those students saw an opportunity to make their life better and seized it. They faced down the obstacles that stood in their path and overcame them to achieve a goal. And each of those students - Jesuit-educated students - recognized that their education would be for naught if not used in service of others.

Now, you probably aren't a refugee, but I'd be willing to bet that all of you have faced obstacles. They might have been financial or personal, late nights studying when you'd rather be sleeping, children to get to school, meals to make, jobs to hold down. The stuff of life. And yet you dug down deep and found a way to keep moving forward in order to better your life, your family and our world.



Let me share three examples, stories of your classmates here today:

Todd came from humble beginnings. After school, while other children watched television or played games, a young Todd worked with his grandfather. His grandfather taught Todd to make a living with his hands. Whether it was repairing drywall or plumbing, or even collecting soda cans for the deposits, Todd learned the importance of hard work. His grandfather also told him that getting a college degree was one of the most important things he could do in his life. Todd took those lessons to heart. Despite significant financial challenges and working full time as a transportation maintenance worker, Todd finished his degree in record time. He graduates today with a Bachelor's in Business Management and hopes to use his Regis education to save lives. Literally. He wants to apply his learning to a career in the fire service.

Tammy never got her bachelor's degree. Life just happened. By the time she started thinking about going back to college she had a family and a full-time job. Rather than seeing those things as obstacles to education, she saw them as inspiration. She wanted to show her children that no matter your age or situation, you could make a decision to change your life. There were challenges - balancing classes, work and family, plus struggles with her health - but she knew that if she quit, her children would learn the wrong lesson. And that was not an option. Tammy graduates today with a Bachelor's of Arts in Elementary Education. When she finishes her student teaching, she plans to get a master's from Regis. She wants to make a difference in the lives of children, teaching them the lesson she taught her own - let nothing stand in the way of your dreams.

And last, but not least, there is Dan. He and his family are here today all the way from Stuttgart, Germany, where Dan has been working as an information security engineer since 2010. Dan jokes that he has been on the 20-year degree plan. He first started college in 1991, but before he could finish, was called to serve his country in the military. During his service, he started online classes with a different university, but didn't enjoy the experience. After 10 years as an enlisted soldier, and three as an officer, he was seriously injured. He moved back to Denver, and not long after started at Regis. Job opportunities brought him to Honduras, and then Germany, but he continued to take classes online. Three continents. Multiple jobs. Several years and many, many late nights have brought him here today. He graduates with a Bachelor's in Computer Networking and his goal is to protect people through a career in cyber security. He's already registered to start on his Master's in Information Assurance at Regis.

These are three of countless stories. Each of you has your own - complete with challenges and joys, successes and failures - the stuff of life that you had to grapple with in order to be here today.



But you made it! This is your day. Your graduation day is here!

Graduates of Regis University, my charge to you is this:

- There will always be obstacles. Let nothing stand in your way.
- Follow your heart and trust that God has a plan.
- And most importantly, always remember that your degree from Regis University is more than a certificate of completion. A Regis degree is a promise to you and to the world. It's a promise that you will use your gifts and skills to make the world a more humane and just place.

Thank you for making us proud.

Congratulations, graduates, and welcome to the Regis University Alumni Association.