Archbishop Lorie, Fr. Witherup, Distinguished guests, faculty, students and staff, I have the honor this evening of offering words of welcome to St. Mary’s Seminary & University, on behalf of the entire Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the United States. This year marks the 225th Anniversary of this Seminary and at the same time the 225th year of the arrival of the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States.

I am reminded of a quotation of the famous American poet and essayist, Emerson, who wrote that the true ornamentation of a home is not found in the “brick & mortar” but rather in the friends that frequent it! You all have blessed and honored this esteemed institution tonight by your support, collaboration in our mission and presence here this evening. You are part of this institution and our rich history and tradition.

Permit me to share a story as I begin, Passionist Father Donald Senior completed his doctoral work in Sacred Scripture, thinking he was going to return home to a scholar’s life within the academe. That did not happen; rather he spent 23 years as the President of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and now serves as its Chancellor. Does this story sound familiar Fr. Hurst?

This year, Fr. Don Senior published a book entitled The Gift of Administration. In this work he notes four key qualities needed for Institutional Leadership:

1. A Leader needs to keep focused on the mission of the institution and be faithful to it.
2. A Leader must balance the needs of the various component parts while keeping the needs of the institution in mind.
3. A Leader needs to secure the personal, financial and structural resources necessary for the effective carrying out of the institutional mission. In other words, to be a good steward.
4. Lastly, a Leader must ensure good relationships with the wider world outside the institution. This includes both “Friend Making” as well as “Fending off the enemies at the door”.

Tom, in your tenure as Rector here at St. Mary’s Seminary & University you have succeeded in each of the four qualities articulated by Don Senior.

You have maintained your focus on the mission of the Seminary while faithfully serving as “its Pastor”.

You have been able to balance the various and complex component parts of this institution. Like a skilled parent, responding to the needs as they present themselves without showing favorites, and keeping all the kids happy at the same time! No easy task.

You have exercised good stewardship over the many blessings that St. Mary’s Seminary enjoys today. The physical plant, the various programs, and the endowment have been overseen with a watchful eye and a loving heart by a good steward.

Lastly, you have secured the bond of friendship with many from within the Church and the larger community for the betterment of the institution. And when needed you have fended off the “foe at the gate”.

In closing, as you begin a new chapter in your life, I would like to express to you on behalf of the Society of St. Sulpice, Province of the United States and this venerable 225 year old institution – our deepest Thanks and best wishes to you as you move forward. Sto Lat!

Very Rev. John C. Kemper, P.S.S.

Provincial Superior (21 April 2016)