Thank you for the kind introduction. I want to acknowledge my parents, Dick and Marge Gross, my sisters and their husbands, assorted other relatives and friends, and of course many of my Ursuline Sisters, classmates and fellow alums. Thank you all for being here this evening. I also want to offer my congratulations to Kim on the Crystal Award. Well deserved.

When I looked at the list of illustrious women of Ursuline who have been blessed with this award, I thought – "Wow, is this some kind of mistake? Did they mean another Sister Joanne?" Once Tiffany assured me that it was no mistake, I felt very humbled and very honored.

Because I was a history major and because I am a lawyer, I hope you will indulge me while I share a very brief story about an 1819 US Supreme Court case, commonly known as the Dartmouth College case. The legal issue was whether, under the Constitution's contract clause, the state of New Hampshire could change the nature of a private school charter, essentially making it a state institution. Daniel Webster, a Dartmouth alum, and a great 19th century orator who later served in the US Senate, argued for Dartmouth College before the court. To this day, Dartmouth remains a private college, so we know that Webster's arguments prevailed.

While there were certainly legitimate legal reasons for the court's decision, legend has it that the justices were moved at least in part by Daniel Webster's impassioned words on behalf of his alma mater. The most enduring line of his argument was this: "It is ... a small college. And yet there are those who love it!"

I have always thought those words so fit Ursuline; and I've never had an opportunity to use them until now. Those of you sitting here, the faithful alumnae of Ursuline, know what it means to love "this small college." You know that Ursuline aspires to educate, not necessarily the titans of industry, but the salt of the earth. It is a small school that tells its students – teach, create, heal, care, design, write, serve, lead, give, seek justice, speak your truth, continue to learn throughout your life, - and above all do what you do with compassion and an abiding respect for every person you meet along the way. When they founded this College in 1871, my Ursuline foremothers had a vision for women's education that was unique in its time. I believe that they would be pleased with what Ursuline College has become, pleased with the administration and faculty who model so well the compassion and respect they seek to instill, and proud of all of the wonderful women – and now many men – who serve the world as Ursuline College graduates. Thank you for this honor. I am deeply grateful. May all of you be blessed for your love and support of Ursuline College.

Sister Joanne Gross, OSU, JD, Ursuline College 1978
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