

Before I introduce our keynote speaker, I want to talk about Dr. Baylor's and our school's commitment to three virtues: faith, honor, and our pursuit of excellence.

**Faith** – In my opening chapel talk back in August, I talked about the importance of faith in my life and in the life of our school. Indeed, in the founding by-laws of the school, our board of trustees are directed to lead the school with Christian values and Christian love. This direction does not stand up against welcoming people of all faiths or of even no faith to Baylor...indeed, I would argue that Jesus's example of extending love to everyone gives us a perfect example of how to practice our faith. At the same time, we embrace our heritage of faith and the responsibility we have for keeping your faith walk growing. This fall we have taken steps to encourage and even to challenge your walk with God. From chapel services to senior speeches and from community gatherings in residential life to Bible studies, we are working to honor Dr. Baylor's vision for faith at his school.

**Honor** – We talk often about the honor code being the pillar of our school. In a recent survey of Baylor patrons, alumni, and students, 94 % of our school family believe that honor is deeply embedded in the Baylor experience. Yet, we know that we have fallen short in the past months. When there is one theft at Baylor, that is one theft too many. While we must protect ourselves from the outside world, we should never feel the need to do so from members of our own community. This fall, we experienced breaches of our honor code that strike at the heart of who we are. I know that the overwhelming majority of people in the room embrace, live by, and protect the honor code. I ask you this morning to recommit to this foundational value.

**The Pursuit of Excellence** – Finally, and before I turn the podium over to Coach Curry, I want to talk for a moment about our school's commitment to pursue excellence in all that we do. In the same survey that I just referenced, our alumni, students, teachers, and parents underscored the tough demands of the school's commitment to excellence. The single word that appeared more than any other in our survey responses of more than 2300 was "challenging." In the accompanying commentary, alumni write about hard it was for them to balance studying, sports, extracurriculars, community service, and student life at Baylor. I remember the same stress from my experience more than forty years ago, and my daughters who are recent graduates experienced the same. The fact is this: To experience all that Baylor offers and requires and to honor that with our best efforts ... well, that is challenging and even exhausting. Yet, almost to a person, our alumni who make this observation talk about the rewards of the journey, even when their best efforts fell short. They talk about life lessons; learning to accept responsibility; and ultimately to finding balance and peace.

Part of what makes all this effort worth it are two qualities which are also endemic to our school:

\*Success...all our hard work and sacrifice have yielded impressive results...both for individuals and for the teams and organizations which proudly wear the Baylor B. Shout out this morning to our wrestling team, our fencing team, and our basketball teams for their recent successes.

\*Family-The other quality, one of which I am most proud, is the sense of family we enjoy here. We are not perfect...no family is...but we are family, and when we are united, no one can

stop us...when we aspire as a school family to live with *magnanimitas*, no experience has more meaning.

And that very obvious segue brings us to our keynote speaker this morning, Coach Bill Curry.

\*Bill was a two-time Super Bowl Champion and played in two NFL Pro Bowls.

\*As a college football coach, he was highly successful at his alma mater, Georgia Tech, and he was named National Coach of the Year at Alabama and later became the first head football coach ever at Georgia State.

\*Bill played for some of the greatest coaches of all time, including Vince Lombardi, Don Shula, and Bobby Dodd. His teammates included legendary players like Willie Davis, Bart Starr, and Johnny Unitas. He has studied the lives and methods of his personal heroes from past generations...from Helen Keller to Teddy Roosevelt.

I have been privileged to know Coach Curry for three decades and to have witnessed him through good times and bad. He is a person of enormous character and good will, and I am deeply proud that he carries our school as a part of who he is. I'll let him explain. Please help me welcome back to Baylor, Coach Bill Curry.