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- I want to thank the faculty, staff and the governors of Acadia University and of Acadia Divinity College for this honour. As a child of the Prairies but of parents whose roots run deep in The Maritimes, I've come from a clan full of Acadia alumni. And therefore, it's probably time that I aligned myself with the Alma Mater, but thank you and thank you for this honour.

To you, as the graduates of 2020 and 2021, I want to acknowledge the courage and the resilience you have shown over this last year during the COVID crisis. You have weathered the white water of powerlessness from the forces around you, and you have succeeded to come to the end of the chapter of your journey, at least this end of the chapter.

My hope is that you realize that education is not simply the access and the taking in of knowledge, but it also plays a formational role in character building, it widens your horizons, it deeply impacts the way you look at the world, and COVID has produced a rich ground to see that at work.

I have often said that the opposite of hope is not hopelessness. In truth, the opposite of hope is a lack of imagination. In the midst of what seemingly is insurmountable hopelessness, imagination is the way that you navigate and negotiate the terrain.

These are the people who can imagine that things can change. These are the people that can think that things can get better. These are the people who believe that they can make a difference, no matter how small and no matter how insignificant. These are people not bounded in fear, they can imagine a place where we can dialogue in difference and live well together, all because in our curiosity, we seek understanding and community rather than isolation and fear.

The power of imagination lives from a place of security and groundedness in such a way that dialogue is possible in the difference. James Fowler, a theologian one time said, "When the spine of identity is well established, it's possible to risk relating in depth to those who are different than ourselves. But when the spine of identity is weak, then everything is a threat."

My hope is that you will fuel your future with imagination. May imagination be the catalyst in all that you do, and may you choose to live out those driving forces and not give into fear. Years ago, a courageous Black pastor stood on the political stage of Washington DC and he spoke what has become known as "I have a dream" speech. He had the incredible imagination of a new way of living together, not yet realized, not yet fleshed out, but it shook the world to its core, and at least it set a new course.

May you have that kind of imagination in the coming years. Thank you.