

**Opening Convocation, Fall 2004  
Firestone Fieldhouse  
September 9, 2004**

**Meditation:**

One of my favorite times of the year is the beginning of school in the fall. There is a wonderful excitement and energy that is contagious and that gives me enthusiasm for the semester ahead. For our returning students it is a kind of home coming. We picked up Zach – our grandson who is getting ready to leave for Heidelberg next week, and he said “As we turned onto PCH I felt like I was coming home.” I see that in the way you greet one another and I love to watch the hugs and hear the delight in your voices as friends see one another again.

For our new students there may be some bewilderment – especially as they try to find the Religion division or figure out how to get to CAC from the main parking lot. But there is a real sense of expectation and hope that come with the knowledge that dreams are being fulfilled.

For us all it is a new beginning – great thing about a school year – every semester ends – a chance to begin again – even for faculty – new students, a chance to teach this course just a bit better, a new assignment to try --it is the rhythm of the academic calendar – semesters end and begin anew.

There is a rhythm in God that makes all things new. It is expressed in Lamentations 3:22 – The steadfast love of the lord never ceases – his mercies never come to an end – they are new every morning – great is his faithfulness.

Each day God provides a new day – but more than that – we can begin each new day knowing that in God all things are new – that his forgiveness and mercy removes the dross from our lives – the failings of the previous day – and we can begin again – by his grace. That is a life of true promise, expectation, and hope.

**Prayer:**

Our father, we acknowledge you as creator and Lord. We worship you with our hymns of praise and the meditations of our hearts and the fruit of our hands each day. We honor you with our lives. We are grateful for your love that you extend to us each day and for your mercies that are new every morning. Today, O God, we are thankful for life and promise and the hope that a new school year brings. You are the one who makes all things new.

Bless us we pray, according to your grace and your riches in Christ Jesus. Teach us, who would learn of you – we pray – to love goodness and to seek truth. Teach us, we pray, to give of ourselves freely and lead us in paths of

righteousness – in paths of service for your name’s sake and deliver us from evil.

Show us, O God, how to love more freely. Teach us to be kind and forgiving, and walk with us this year, O God, and give us greater capacity for caring. We live in a troubled world and we seek your peace and the freedom, that comes from knowing you and the forgiveness that you provide. Make us instruments of your peace – here, in this place, and in the world.

We are thankful for this new day and for our students and for their families who sent them here with their blessings. We ask now for your blessing on their lives and on our school year. We place our trust in you and ask that you be with us, our students, faculty, staff and administration as the year unfolds. And bless our University, O God. May this be a place where we can see you face. And bless and president Benton. Grant him strength for his tasks, wisdom from above as he leads, and your grace in all things. In the name of Jesus, your beloved son, Amen

### **Introduction of President Benton**

It is my privilege to introduce president Benton this morning. Of course he needs no introduction to this audience but Dr. Benton has been Pepperdine’s president for 5 years. I have had the opportunity to work with Dr. Benton since his years as Executive VP and I know him as a man of integrity and grace, a competent leader, and a Christian gentleman. But I commend him to you today because of his devotion to God, his love for our University, and his heart for students. Please welcome to the podium President Andrew Benton.

**D’Esta Love**  
**University Chaplain**