

**Opening Convocation, Spring 2004
Firestone Fieldhouse**

I want to welcome each of you to this opening convocation of the semester and we are grateful that you have arrived on campus safely. We hope that your holiday season was joyous but also restful. This morning I particularly want to welcome all of our new students who have just completed NSO and are ready to begin classes today. We hope you are beginning to feel at home and wish you every success for the semester.

This is a great time of year. For some of you it means that you have completed your first semester at Pepperdine and for others you are beginning your last. So we want to especially congratulate (in anticipation of the completion of the semester) our graduating seniors.

This is not only the beginning of a new semester, it also marks the beginning of a new year. Therefore this is a time that is pregnant with the promise of new beginnings. Perhaps you have made resolutions for both the year and the semester. Perhaps you have resolved to study harder – or smarter, to bring balance to your life – or your checkbook, to spend more time with a friend—or make one (I can't keep doing this). Perhaps you have resolved to devote yourself more fully to God and give yourself more readily in service to others.

Whatever your resolutions are, my prayer for you is that all your good intentions will be realized and even in the face of adversity and disappointment that will surely be part of your experience as well – that you will know the grace of our God who heals our diseases, mends broken hearts, forgives our sins, comforts those who grieve, and enables us to live abundantly in him.

Please pray with me.

Faithful God, loving and forgiving, merciful and full of grace, we thank you this day for another new year and a new semester. We give thanks for life, for family and friends, for meaningful work to do, for your grace by which we know forgiveness and life.

We are grateful for our students and for Pepperdine and the opportunities we have to learn together. We ask a blessing upon our campus – upon our students, faculty, staff and administration. We also ask a blessing for our families and loved ones, particularly those who are far away. May we and they be strengthened day by day to serve you and others. Draw near to us when we call to you, give us strength when we grow weary, lift us up when we fall, hear our prayers, and grant us your mercy and sustain us in your love.

May we seek deeper places where our compassion, our joy—may reflect you and your love. We give this year to your care and keeping. Bless us we pray in the name of Jesus who loved us and gave himself for us – amen.

D'Esta Love