Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I had many professors influence me during, and after my time at BC, but the one that I will always remember most fondly is Professor Thomas O’Connor. I took two of his classes in history that I will never forget – so with a nod to him, it is only appropriate that I start today’s comments with a bit of history regarding why we are here.

It was 100 years ago on the 11th day of the 11th month and in the 11th hour that major hostilities of World War I came to an end and the Armistice with Germany went into effect. For twenty years we celebrated Armistice Day – a day focused on remembering heroism, peace and justice. It was not until 1938 that Armistice Day became a legal holiday; and it was not until 1954, after both WWII and the Korean War, that the holiday became known as Veterans Day. And some in the crowd may remember that there was actually a time in the 70’s when the observance was moved from November 11th to a convenient Monday in October, but fortunately that was corrected in 1978 when it was appropriately moved back to November 11th – a date of historic significance and one we contemplate today on the 100th anniversary.

Veterans Day is about honoring and remembering, not just those who died in service to our country, but all military veterans who have served. If you served I’d ask that you please stand to be recognized. And if you are a family member of a veteran who served please stand – we could not have done what we did without your support and sacrifice – thank you.

I am humbled and honored to be here with the memorial behind me capturing the 210 names of Boston College Alumni who served their country - and when called upon paid the ultimate sacrifice. I am also thankful to so many of the people gathered here who took the lead so many years ago in establishing a veterans alumni network, this memorial and this annual event.

I’d like to welcome and recognize our distinguished guests and the folks who make this event happen:

First and foremost is Paul Delaney, an alum who has joined us from FL – Paul was the founder of the effort to build this memorial many years ago – as a BC alum and veteran, I am personally grateful that he started a movement that has brought us all together today. Also joining us is: Executive Vice President Michael Lochhead; LTC Joseph Luchetta, Lead Officer, Liberty BN ROTC; Fr. Keane, SJ, Rector of the Jesuit Community; Fr Monahan, SJ; Leah DeCosta, Associate VP of the BC Alumni Association, Jean Chisser, Associate Director of Alumni Special Services; and last, but certainly not least, Dan Arkins and George Harrington, co-chairs of the Boston College Veterans Alumni Network. I would also like to welcome the veteran students, members of the ROTC Unit, and the faculty and staff of Boston College.

I appreciate the introduction. As noted I am a graduate of the BC Class of ’82 – and to put that in perspective – Doug Flutie was a freshman when I graduated … during my freshman year the football team went 0-11, and it was not until five games into my sophomore year that we finally
won a game and took down the goal posts… I believe that is probably why they have now have fences around the field … well thank goodness we didn’t have cell phone cameras back then… some of us in this crowd may not be here.

“Our First Duty is to Remember”…

I am a proud retired Marine and a veteran of the Multi-National Peacekeeping Force in Beirut, having served back in 1983 following the terrorist bombing of the Marine Barracks on 23 October…

As a life-member of the Beirut Veterans Association I believe in our organization’s motto - that our first duty is to remember - to remember the service and sacrifice of our fallen comrades - you see we keep that front and center because we remain worried that people will forget the 220 US Marines, 18 sailors, and 3 soldiers, lost in that terrorist attack on a quiet Sunday morning halfway around the world from Camp Lejeune, NC.

This incident resulted in the deadliest single-day death toll for the United States Marine Corps since the Battle of Iwo Jima in World War II, the deadliest single-day death toll for the United States Armed Forces since the first day of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, and the deadliest terrorist attack on American citizens overseas.

Just a couple of weeks ago we remembered the nine Massachusetts Marines who died in Beirut on the 35th Anniversary of the bombing at the memorial at Columbus Park in the North End. These were men who understood service and sacrifice.

And it is service and sacrifice that I would like to talk about with you today as we remember those we know have served in uniform, and those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice.

Now I don’t worry about this crowd forgetting about the service and sacrifice of our veterans, and I applaud our alma mater for their leadership in recognizing that service takes all forms, that military service is necessary, self-less and important in today’s world, and that when people sacrifice their lives for their values and a way of life, it is worthy of a memorial that is re-dedicated annually so that they are not forgotten.

Today at Boston College we remember – not just those who died in service to their country, but all Boston College men and women veterans who have worn the uniform – we pause and we remember the collective service and sacrifice of this distinguished group.

My exposure to the Jesuits began at a young age. My uncle, Fr. Michael Walsh SJ, had been President at Boston College from 1958 to 1968, so I grew up with BC being very much a part of my life – we attended football games and often attended Mass and other celebrations at the campus. My formal Jesuit education however began at BC High where, as a teenager, I first learned about being a man for others – back then we had many Jesuits in the classroom and on the campus – just a couple of years before I started, the Jesuit school in Bagdad had been closed suddenly and many of the faculty returned home to BC High. These men were tough, fair and focused on imparting an ideal to us that they hoped would stay with us throughout our lives – the idea of being in service to others.
Our curriculum included service projects in the community and I learned the concept of giving back - my time, my talents and my treasure. On a weekly basis we collected money for the poor neighborhoods in Boston, routinely held food and clothing drives, and our senior year included a semester of service in the community.

At Boston College my Jesuit education continued, and this notion and focus of service and serving others permeated all we did as students.

We became men and women for others, through exposure to a well-thought curriculum and Jesuit examples in the classroom. Although not everyone seeks a career of service to others following graduation – like many of you here today – I did choose service, and joined the Marine Corps.

For me joining the Marine Corps was an easy decision. The influences of my family across generations who had served in the military was a part of growing up - my grandfather John Dunford, a first generation American, joined the US Army and served in the Coastal Artillery Corps in Boston Harbor in 1918, and at the Panama Canal in the early-20’s. His older brother Thomas, served with the 101st Infantry Regiment of the Yankee Division in France, and his youngest brother, James, a member of the BC Class of 1927, moved across Comm Ave to join the priesthood and continue his studies at St. John’s Seminary. James joined the Massachusetts National Guard in 1941, and served for nearly three years as the Chaplain of the America I Division during WWII on Guadalcanal and Bougainville – he continued his military service in the Massachusetts National Guard after the war, retiring as a Brigadier General.

Other uncles and relatives throughout my extended family served in harm’s way in the Marine Corps, US Navy, US Air Force and US Army from World War II to present day. My father Joseph Dunford was a Marine Veteran of the Korean War, serving in the infantry with the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines as part of the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade. He and his unit landed at Inchon, fought during the Battle for Seoul, and survived the Chinese invasion and the harshest of winter conditions during the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir in December 1950. My older brother Joe serves today as a US Marine and veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan, and my niece Tricia serves in the US Navy flying P-3’s in the Persian Gulf – she is the fourth generation of Dunfords to serve during the last 100 years.

I witnessed service in action throughout my young life, and it was reinforced throughout my education at Boston College.

The men on the wall behind me understood the Jesuit ideals and this notion of service - they lived it, and paid the ultimate sacrifice while remaining committed to it.

Preparing for today was in and of it-self an incredible experience for me – I could not help but be drawn into the stories behind many of the veterans who we memorialize on this wall. As somewhat of an amateur genealogist, my curiosity of who these men were, and what they did in service, got the better of me as I delved into countless stories of our fellow alumni.
These are stories that impress and humble you as you learn about who they were before they served, and the often heroic circumstances of their sacrifice.

Given the time I have today I can’t talk about all of them, but I want to share a few that span nearly 100 years since the end of WWI that demonstrate the Boston College Jesuit value of service to others in action.

Men like Edwin Aloysius Daly, BC Class of 1916, from Mass Ave in Boston. Edwin found his passion as a writer during his time at BC, and in his senior year served as the Editor-in-Chief of the Stylus. Commissioned an Army Second Lieutenant in May 1917, he left for France in October to serve with the Rainbow Division. Edwin paid the ultimate sacrifice in fierce fighting along the River Ourcq in July 1918 during the Battle of Soissons. The US Forces were in support of the French Army to defeat the Germans and take back the land that had been gained during the 1918 spring offensive - the battle resulted in 107,000 allied casualties, that included 12,000 US servicemen to include Lt. Daly.

Edwin received the Silver Star posthumously for gallantry in action, and Edwin A. Daly Square, located near Columbus Ave and Appleton Street in Boston, is named for him.

Men like John J. Canney Jr., BC Class of 1938 from Cambridge, MA. A member of the Glee Club, Dramatics, and both the Marquette and Fulton Debating Societies, John served as an enlisted Marine in the reserves during college at the Boston Navy Yard. He was commissioned a Marine Second Lieutenant following graduation and assigned as a pilot. John flew missions from Guam in the Pacific during World War II. In1950 the Korean War was well underway and John had attained the rank of Major and was serving as the Executive Officer of 3rd Battalion 5th Marines, at a place called Yudam-ni near the Chosin Reservoir – not far from where my father served with the 1st Battalion 5th Marines at the same time.

On 28 November, as enemy troops moved to within 20 yards of his command post, John, without regard for his own personal safety, courageously moved among the defensive positions and directed the fire of his men, lending words of encouragement and redeploying the troops as necessary until he was mortally wounded. John was awarded the Navy Cross posthumously, as many of you know the nation’s second highest award for bravery, and promoted to the rank of LtCol.

His remains were never found, but his name is inscribed on the Courts of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial in Hawaii…. and here at Boston College.

And… Men like David S. Connolly, BC Class of 1994 from Newton, MA. David’s life, like the others I talked about, was all about service to others. He first enlisted in the US Coast Guard out of high school and after his service, received an honorable discharge. He then enlisted in the US Army with a goal of being commissioned as an officer. He enrolled at the BC School of Advancing Studies and through his hard work and dedication, received an Army ROTC Scholarship. He was commissioned an Army Second Lieutenant in 1994, achieving the goal he had set.
By 2004, following his service on active duty as an officer, he volunteered again to serve in the war on terror. At this point he had become a lawyer and was working as an assistant district attorney in Suffolk County. Placing the needs of others ahead of his own, he stepped up to serve again and was assigned to the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force at Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan.

David died tragically in a helicopter crash in April 2005 while serving with the 7th Special Forces Group in Ghazni, Afghanistan. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star, and was the first graduate of Boston College's ROTC program to lose his life in hostile action since the Vietnam War.

I could share countless other examples of service and sacrifice from among our fellow alums, heroes like: John J. Shea, USN who fought in the Pacific in WWII, and Joseph Campbell, USMC, who fought in Vietnam - both recipients of the Navy Cross; and Joseph X. Grant, US Army, who also fought in Vietnam, and was a Medal of Honor Recipient; but I think you will agree that the Jesuit ideals that we all learned were an integral part of these men and the other 204 on the wall behind me as they served others.

“Our Second Duty as veterans is to Serve Again”…. A lot has changed in the country and our military since 1918 – but the desire to serve our country is still held dear by millions of young Americans today who believe in that ideal that Americans have shared for over 100 years.

Today we are at war – I say that not to remind this group, but for us to understand that when we are at war our fighting men and women need our help while they serve, and even more so when they return home.

Hostilities continue on a global scale in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, the Horn of Africa, and the Philippines to name just a few.

Every year more than 200,000 veterans leave active service and need our help – they need us to serve again by helping them with the challenging transition they face after multiple deployments to some of the world’s toughest places. The tempo of operations and the long separations from family create a strain that challenges even the strongest among us. The impact of modern medicine on the battlefield has improved survivability resulting in more wounded warriors returning home in need of services and support than ever before.

Our veterans need our help – but like generations gone by, they don’t always ask; but as you look at your world and the place in this world that hard work and a BC education has provided you, think about how you can help our veterans – is it your time, your talent, or perhaps your treasure?

Veterans remain homeless at an alarming rate; they face invisible wounds of war and transition challenges across a broad spectrum of services to include employment, housing and healthcare; and the suicide rate among veterans is simply unacceptable.
As an HR consultant and executive coach I often talk to leaders about change and focusing on what you control - today I would ask you to think about what you control - are you an employer that can hire a veteran? Are you someone that can financially support a cause that does great work for veterans in dealing with homelessness or the invisible wounds of war like Home Base (www.homebase.org)? Or can you volunteer your time to be a mentor to a veteran in transition?

My work with veterans in career transition with FourBlock (www.fourblock.org) and Edge4Vets (www.edge4vets.com), and the work I do focusing on housing, food and counseling needs with the Cape & Islands Veterans Outreach Center (www.capeveterans.com) in Hyannis has enlightened me to the fact that anything we can do makes a difference.

And believe me when I say there is much we can do – as we contemplate this Jesuit notion of being men and women for others – as we pause today to remember the service and sacrifice of those on this memorial and all veterans - consider what you can do for our veterans.

In closing -- John F. Kennedy once said:

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

It will be our actions that make the difference in the lives of our veterans.

Thank you for your time – but more importantly thank you for your support and service to our veterans.

- Semper Fidelis and God Bless

-END-