

YOUR ALUMNI COUNCIL

Sacred Laurentian Space



I am incapable of imagining a St. Lawrence without Gunnison Memorial Chapel at its heart. Thanks to the swift and robust response of the Canton and other area fire departments during last fall's fire (see the Winter 2014 St. Lawrence for the full story), I do not have to imagine such a sad circumstance, and neither do the thousands of Laurentians around the world who share my feelings.

I think all of us knew that Gunnison was sacred to us before this frightening event, but perhaps now we feel our connection more acutely than ever. Difficult circumstances have a way of helping us clarify what we truly value and love, and they can bring families closer together. The Laurentian family has been given two wonderful gifts in the wake of the fire: our sacred space has been saved, and we have been united as a community in our warm thoughts and support for the restoration of the building that symbolizes the Laurentian spirit.

Not all college families have such a space that they consider so central to their identity. Two years ago, when my fiancée and I were planning our wedding, I thought I was asking a great deal when I suggested to Pamela, who graduated from Clarkson, that we be married in Gunnison. She quickly, and graciously, agreed that Gunnison was the perfect place, noting that although she loved her alma mater, there was no space that was as important to her (and other Golden Knights) as

our beautiful chapel is to us. She saw that Gunnison represented more than just a physical space to me and the many Laurentians in our wedding party. She recognized that what we feel about our sacred space is very real, very special, and worth celebrating.

As I reflect upon the numerous happy and sad times when I have gathered with fellow Laurentians in Gunnison Memorial Chapel during the last quarter century, I cannot escape the conclusion that aside from my childhood home, no other single space has had a greater influence upon who I am and what I value. Had that space been completely consumed by flames during the recent fire, would all of that have been lost? Certainly not. But how blessed we all are that we have not lost this powerful symbol of our values and our identity, this precious gathering place that allows us to reaffirm our love for all things Laurentian.

So when we as a Laurentian family thank the brave members of the Canton Volunteer Fire Department, and the neighboring departments, for their heroic and effective efforts to save our chapel, we are not thanking them for simply saving a beautiful edifice. We are thanking them for saving a piece of our hearts, a place that is truly sacred to us and so many we love. Like President Fox, who so eloquently expressed our Laurentian family's thanks to the fire departments, I too am truly thankful that St. Lawrence lives in a town called Canton.

Stephen Todd '92

Alumni Executive Council President

For updates on the chapel restoration project, please see www.stlawu.edu/news