

Good morning.

And what a good morning it is.

There are events, moments in our calendar each year, that are constants.

Here in this good city, we know in May we will gather together as a community, at Boston College, to break bread.

And there are also values, constants in our lives, in this country,

this Commonwealth, this city

that constitute the foundation of our society - values that we share:

- Love of democracy.
- A belief in equality.
- A commitment to human rights.
- And, here in Newton, the core values of respect, diversity and acceptance.

While we do not all worship in the same way,

and some of us are not part of a faith tradition,

all of us hope for:

- A country that is more empathetic or, to repeat something Rabbi Alison Barry once said, radically empathetic;
- A Commonwealth that is more just;
- A community that is more caring; and
- A City that is greater, better, and more beautiful.

These, our shared values and common hopes, draw us closer together in times of uncertainty:

- When the world feels unstable and our schools less safe;
- When harsh words and disrespectful attitudes pervade public discourse;
- When swastikas and hate speech are reported so often; and
- When mothers of students of color feel compelled to meet with me and the Chief of Police.

So, what brings us together here this morning?

Father Leahy, we're grateful for your hospitality but it's not the quiche or the pastries.

Rather,

- It's the hopefulness of the songs and prayers;
- The inspiration from our award winners, and, most fundamentally
- The possibility of a better future we can create powered by the people in this room, and others, working together.

Because, by working together, we can and are and must continue to build a more caring community.

As many of you know, I grew up in Detroit, in the city itself. In 1967, the riots literally tore apart the city. As a result, I have never assumed a city inevitably works together; rather, it takes commitment – will- to work together.

That's why this breakfast is important. This breakfast reinforces our shared values and strengthens our will to work together to build a radically empathetic Newton.

In a moment, I'm going to ask three groups to stand together to be recognized for doing this good and difficult work:

- The first group is all our elected officials, including District Attorney Marian Ryan, Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian, State Representative Kay Khan, City Council President Marc Laredo, and School Chair Ruth Goldman and so many City Councilors and School Committee members are here today;
- The second, all our elected officials who served in the past including the Honorable Setti Warren and may I ask the children of Mayor Mann to stand as well?; and
- The third group, the people who work or have worked so hard to make this a better City - our current and former employees of our City and our Schools.

Please stand so we may thank you.

As I look around this room, many are grouped at tables with those we work with or with whom we share a common mission. You, too, are working hard to make this a more caring community.

For example, we have tables here in the front row from the Myrtle Baptist Church and the Village Bank whose generosity today and every day in this city is a true gift;

in the back row, there's Green Newton and Cabot's Ice Cream;

to my right the Carpenter's Local 339 and Families Organizing for Racial Justice or FORJ;

and to my left the Barry Price Center.

To all of these and all of you at tables in between, thank you for your good work.

We also have one individual who is the heart and soul of this breakfast, literally creating harmony year after year. Thank you, Tony Bibbo.

I also want to thank those of you who came on your own this morning and have that sometimes promising but also nerve-wracking moment of sitting down next to someone you don't know. I remember doing that myself not so long ago!

Let me assure you we all have in common a love for this good city.

But, it is incumbent upon each of us to reach out from the table where we're sitting.

We need to understand our differences, embrace them, and then work together even as we hail from:

- Different places of worship;
- Different types of work;
- Different elementary, middle and high schools;
- Thirteen different villages;
- And even different departments within Newton's city government

So that no one feels like a stranger among us and so that together, we make Newton a greater, better and more beautiful City to transmit to our children and grandchildren.

Thank you.

I'm so pleased to welcome our keynote speaker who moved here this past year, Amey Victoria Adkins-Jones.

Rather than reading from her resume – and it is an impressive resume, let me just tell you that you're about to hear from someone who is

smart and scholarly, strong and spiritual,

creative and captivating.

She's terrific. Here's Amey.