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(Address given by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame, at the Formal Opening of the schoolyear, Sacred Heart Church, Notre Dame, Indiana, Sunday, September 21, 1952)

Following a long and fruitful tradition, we gather here in Sacred Heart Church this morning for the eightieth time since the Church was built in 1872, to open, officially and formally, the 110th schoolyear of the University. As is the custom on these solemn occasions, we are offering together a Mass to the Holy Spirit to seek the wisdom and the courage demanded by the times, and expected of each one of us who have dedicated ourselves to Christian education of young men.

In seeking for a theme this year, I have been led to apply to the University and its task today the celebrated motif of Arnold Toynbee's Study of History. As you know, Toynbee uses as his yardstick to measure the growth and decline of classical civilizations the ideas of challenge and response.

Every great civilization grew out of a challenge. Insofar as its response to the challenge was vital, the particular civilization grew and prospered. To the extent that it failed to meet the continuing challenge, each civilization in turn declined until today we find, only in

the pages of history and on the carved surfaces of monuments, the glories of most classical cultures now long since deceased.

Many have said that Western culture is dying; certainly, most will admit that it has lost much of its vitality. Yet it is precisely as a part of this rich heritage that we do survive. Not only a remnant are we, but a remnant linked with the spiritual tap roots that have accounted for most of the vitality that has remained in Western culture.

Certainly it is fitting this year to review our part in that rich pattern, the challenges that have been answered and those that must yet be answered, if we are to contribute our share to the survival of the larger reality of Western culture, of which we are but a part.

The challenges that have faced great civilizations were normally dual in character: physical challenges and spiritual challenges. For example, the great Egyptian civilization met the physical challenge of survival by changing broad mosaic swamp lands into the fertile valley of the Nile. But their leaders failed in the larger spiritual challenge of bringing social justice to their people. It was the work of slaves, not free men, that built the pyramids. Little did the rulers realize that they were not only building

magnificent tombs for themselves, but for their civilization as well.

We have seen the ebb and flow of physical and spiritual challenges in this country as well as in this University. The pioneers conquered the West, the railroads spanned the great continental plains, bridged the rivers, and crossed the Rockies. Technology completed the task so that today we race the sun across the land and talk from coast-to-coast as easily as from room-to-room. Yes, the physical challenge of survival, the additional challenges of space and time have been met, but what of the deeper challenges of the spirit?

Do Americans think better, read better, write better today, + do they have a better married and family life, are wars diminishing and prayers more fervent, and lives more righteous in the sight of God? Or is God even granted sight? +

Returning to the University for the moment, we know that our history, in the light of the physical challenges of survival here, paralleled that of our country. One hundred and ten years ago, Father Sorin arrived here after more than a week's arduous journey from nearby Vincennes, Indiana. His total assets were some bleak land, a drafty log cabin, an ox-cart full of goods, and \$400.00 in cash. More important, no doubt, even in meeting the physical

challenges, were the consecrated lives of his companions, the vision of faith, hope, and charity in his own stalwart heart.

He had more than his share of pestilence and plague, fire and draught, disappointments and deaths in those early years. But he had a vital response to each challenge, he grew with America, and added to the strong fiber of this country's growth.

Today we calculate the physical assets of Notre Dame in millions of dollars, the buildings at more than fifty, the manpower at fifteen hundred, the goods in yard-long sheets of green I.B.M. inventory records. Yes, the physical challenges to the University, like those to our country, have been met with an adequate and even an impressive response. But like the Egyptians of old, we cannot survive by merely building monuments. The last-
ing works of man are those of the spirit. Without them, monuments are never †
better than tombs.

What are the challenges of the spirit that face our civilization, our country, and our University today? Certainly, a prime challenge is
the need for wisdom, not merely the pragmatic prudence of day-by-day decisions,
but the age-old Christian wisdom that understands the whole of creation and

man's place in this pattern. Our work is the perfecting of human beings,
drawing out and developing all the human potentialities of our students.
Certainly this requires of us as educators some clear concept of what is
good for man, for his body and for his soul, for his mind and his will,
for only what is good for man will perfect man and make him happy.

It is the work of wisdom to recognize the true human perfec-
tions and to order them rightly, so that we do not place the goods of the
body above those of the soul, those of time against those of eternity. Wisdom
gives us a pattern of ordered education, because it gives us an ordered view
of the world and of man.

This Christian wisdom which begins with God and leads to God
is the antithesis of the many current forms of wisdom, be they earthly in
their total intent, sensual in their feverish pursuit, or devilish in their
blind pride. Our prayer today is for the grace to ascend above these coun-
terfeit forms of wisdom that can only lead to disorder, unhappiness, and
frustration, because they begin with a false notion of man and then attempt
to remake man according to that caricature. May our prayer for wisdom in
the Mass today be accompanied by prayerful meditation on St. James' words,
which reflect so well the fact that true wisdom in perfecting the mind of

man leads to charity, peace, and order which characterize the perfection of man's will.

St. James states it thus:

"Does any of you lay claim to wisdom or learning? Then let him give proof of his quality by setting a good example, living peaceably as a wise man should. As long as you find bitter jealousy and thoughts of rivalry in your hearts, let us have none of this boasting that perverts the truth; such wisdom as yours does not come from above, it belongs to earth and to nature, and is fit only for devils. Where there is jealousy, where there is rivalry, there you will find disorder and every kind of defect. Whereas the wisdom which does come from above is marked chiefly indeed by its purity, but also by its peacefulness; it is courteous and ready to be convinced, always taking the better part; it carries mercy with it, and a harvest of all that is good; it is uncensorious, and without affectation. Peace is the seed-ground of holiness, and those who make peace will win its harvest."

This Christian wisdom for which we pray today should be the

hallmark of our profession. Our total educative process cannot lead those whom we educate to wisdom unless we begin by seeking to be wise ourselves, and to grow continually in wisdom. We cannot have too much wisdom, any more than we can have too much life or holiness. Nor is wisdom ever misused. A man may put artistic skill or scientific knowledge to evil use, but no man is truly wise unless he acts wisely.

It may occur to you that this emphasis on wisdom depreciates the many other kinds of artistic, technical, and professional knowledge that our University imparts. Yet this is no more true than to say that a recognition of the Supreme Being of God involves a denial of all the other myriad forms of being.

All other forms of knowledge can be ordered and hierarchically arranged under the highest knowledge called wisdom. In fact, without wisdom, and considered only in themselves, all other forms of knowledge and science run the risk of being distorted, simply because, without wisdom they are unrelated to everything else that is and, especially, because without wisdom they are unrelated to God, who supremely IS.

How important then that no matter what our branch of learning

we seek first and foremost to be wise. The tragedy today is that so many educators are learned without being wise - or even good.

In praying for the divine gift of wisdom, we are asking for the fullness of truth, for while individual branches of learning may tend to disintegrate, the totality of knowledge, wisdom, unites all that is true, each in its proper proportion and perspective.

While the imparting of universal knowledge is the specific function of the University, we have ever been interested here in the total perfection of our students. Knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. While isolated and unrelated knowledge of specific facts may remain sterile, wisdom leads a man to face the hurly-burly task of daily living with the peaceful and calm assurance of where he is going, and how the ultimate goals of living may be attained. This is why we do not call a man wise merely because he is learned in this or that field. To know wisely, is to know all that is known in proper order and perspective. To be educated in this wisdom is to know how and why to love God. We who presume to educate young men could not aspire to less than this sort of wisdom ourselves. And who is better prepared to educate others than he who himself possesses the riches of Christian wisdom. † The whole wide world is his to impart, and God is at the very heart of this

world, to be known and loved.

I am sure that it is obvious to all of you how this spiritual challenge for Christian wisdom in our day affects the growth and fruitful development of Notre Dame. The vital response to this challenge can only come from all of our faculty and administration. No one is unimportant in this quest for wisdom, and in our commitment to impart wisdom to the thousands of Notre Dame students. For these young men will soon face in their own lives not only the physical challenge of achieving economic security for themselves and their families, but the deeper and more significant spiritual challenge of living wisely in a world given over to many forms of foolishness.

May the Holy Spirit of God fill all of us with wisdom today and through the year, and may the Notre Dame, the Mother of God and the seat of wisdom, be our beacon along the way.