

(Address of Welcome given by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame, at the 1953 Institute of Spirituality, Notre Dame, Indiana.)

Dear Sisters:

It is always a distinct pleasure and an honor to welcome you to Notre Dame. I might add that it is a particular pleasure to welcome you for the Institute of Spirituality, since in God's Providence this is the best that we have to offer you.

No one can understand Notre Dame without first appreciating the twin forces of life that guided this place since its birth, namely, devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to His Blessed Mother.

I am sure that all of you have heard the story of Father Sorin's arrival here in 1842. It was a chill November afternoon, and the place was covered with a newly-fallen blanket of snow which glistened in the afternoon sunshine. Father Sorin said at a latter date that this reminded him of the spotless purity of the Mother of God, and that he decided to name this place Notre Dame des Lacs, Our Lady of the Lakes, which title has from that day been on our official seal. I am sure that Father Sorin did not know it at the time, but the fact is that before his coming here, the little log cabin in which Notre Dame began had been a missionary outpost also named after Our Lady: Sainte Marie des Lacs. Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament was no stranger to these parts, for the early missionaries had often said Mass in this cabin for the Pottawatomie Indians. One of these early missionaries, Father Deseille, had administered Viaticum to himself as he lay dying in this cabin. It is even an ancient tradition that Pere Marquette offered Mass on this spot in 1675.

One of the first policy discussions that took place regarding Notre Dame was that which took place between Father Sorin and the Brothers

who came with him. It seems that there were only two rooms in the cabin when Father Sorin came here. The Brothers suggested that they take one room and Father Sorin the other. Father Sorin said no, the best room would go to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, and they would all live in the other room. He wrote his religious superior, our founder, Father Moreau, at LeMans, France, that, "It is quite lonely here, but we do not fear for we have Our Lord with us, and the flickering of the sanctuary light reminds us of His presence and gives us courage."

All that you see here at Notre Dame today is only the development of that early spirit. While buildings have spread in every direction, so has the divine presence of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. You can hardly walk a hundred feet in any direction on this campus without being close to our Eucharistic Lord who lives here in thirty chapels all about the campus. One of the proudest facts I know of Notre Dame is that during the past Lent, there were 154,000 Communion received here. On First Fridays and all during the months of October and May, the months of Mary, there is adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in our University chapel.

Our hearts go warm when we discuss with you the Lady of this House. High above your heads, from atop the Golden Dome, she surveys all of this as her work. She, too, stands there clothed in gold against God's beautiful backdrop of blue sky as a constant reminder to us that she is our life, our sweetness, and our hope. Today it is our honor to welcome you here at her Grotto, a replica of Lourdes. This, too, is a focal spot on campus, and if the school-year were in progress, I would challenge you to come here at any hour of the

day or night and not find some of our boys fervently praying to the Mother they have learned to love and venerate here. If Notre Dame is an honored spot in America today, it is an honor that humbles all of the Congregation of Holy Cross who spend our lives here. We know that all credit and honor is due not to us, but to that Blessed Mother and Her Divine Son who have guided the destiny of this blessed spot since its origin about 111 years ago.

Welcoming you Sisters here today is truly welcoming you home, since home is where you will find Jesus and Mary. And since you come to participate in the Institute of Spirituality, I could wish you nothing better than that the spirituality learned and practiced here should be closer related to those two great forces that have made Notre Dame what it is - devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to His Blessed Mother. Welcoming you here we place you in their hands, and inaugurating your Institute we only ask that it may help you to grow in love and service to God and His Holy Mother. America is indeed proud of its Sisters. Though yours is a silent service, it is at the heart of the growth and stability of Catholic life in America. We trust that we may merge our consecration with yours today in an effort to delve more deeply into those sources of the spiritual life that make all our work in America more fruitful for the honor and glory of God. May God and His Blessed Mother guide and strengthen you now and always.