

(Address given by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Commencement Exercises, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, May 23, 1965)

One afternoon several weeks ago, I was flying at 35,000 feet above the Atlantic, about half way along a line that would curve between the middle of France and the Northern part of Labrador. We were going Westward, chasing the sun, so it was a long afternoon. There was a nagging thought in my mind as the clouds seemed to pass endlessly far beneath my window! that time, too, was passing, and that a few weeks hence I would be here with you, and that, following the tribal custom, I would be expected to say something more or less significant to you on this important occasion when, like yourselves, I would be joining the distinguished body of Gonzaga alumni.

Of course, I have been over this hurdle of commencement-speech writing before. Every one is a new experience though, since the world goes on. More happens than clouds passing. We all get a little older, hopefully a little wiser, certainly more tolerant as our own fallibility becomes more evident.

One might speculate that the ideal remarks at this year's commencement would have some relevance to all of you and to the times through which we are passing. But here is precisely the problem - to say something meaningful to so many different people who have so many different thoughts on their minds at this moment.

Maybe the easiest way out is to get you to say something to yourselves. Let's start by asking if you are happy that you are living where you are and when you are and as you are today. Did you ever think that you might have been someone else or somewhere else? You might have been born in a Neanderthal cave, in Southern Europe, or somewhat later in a Malaysian rain forest, or an iron or bronze age village of the Middle East, or in the Egypt of the Pharaohs, or along the great pre-Christian migration trail somewhere between the Bering Straits and Tierra del Fuego, or even in prehistoric Africa or Asia. You can speculate yourself about other possible times and places in the better known Christian era of the past two thousand years. The point is, however, that you are here, today, and that whatever your preferences in the matter, you don't really have any choice. You can only be happy

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or unhappy about what is. I had an old Jesuit friend who used to say - especially to married couples - success is getting what you want and happiness is wanting what you get. That may have more relevance to marriage than to life generally, but it does lead me to speculate that while you are in a sense stuck with yourself, your times, and your present location, you can do something, with the grace of God, about all three of these realities.

This is not where I swing into the usual graduation routine about your remaking the world tomorrow morning, or at least by next week. I only ask you to tell yourself if you are happy about you, and Spokane, and May 23, 1965. If you answer "yes" in any unconditional or absolute sense, then I suggest that the present ceremony and the years of education preceding it are lost on you. Maybe we should argue a little with each other. My point is that if Catholic higher education does anything, it should make you somewhat unhappy with yourself, and your situation, and your times. Not that I came here today to advocate unhappiness as a goal or an ideal or even a permanent state of mind, but perhaps more clearly to combat smugness, the false

and facile happiness of those who do not appreciate what they do not yet know, who would rather compromise with a half way decent situation than work to make it a little more decent, who accept the enormous blessings of our times rather than see the challenge of making the world better for the great majority who do not enjoy any of the blessings of the developed world.

You've heard the expression, "I'm happy as a clam". This is generally a fairly good description of those who use it. If a clam is happy, it is because he knows nothing, and has no vision beyond the confining, though secure, walls of a shell. As long as the shell is closed, the clam is safe and secure, happy, if you will, and useless, too.

At this point (we just passed over Newfoundland, by the way), the young wife in the seat ahead of mine dropped the top of her pen so I became acquainted with her and her husband while looking for it on the floor. He turned out to be an attractive young man, recently graduated, with two jobs, neither of which he really wants - which is to be a doctor. I gathered that unless he goes to medical school, which

will be harder work and no pay for a few years, he will be unhappy with himself and his situation. I suspect that if he ever reads a life of Tom Dooley, he will be very unhappy indeed. Incidentally, we didn't find the pen top, but the conversation and the first moments of new friendship were worth more, at least to me.

It seems silly at first glance that one would be happier doing something harder, leaving a secure situation for years of insecurity. But that, thank God, is the way we are really made. It is only by deceiving ourselves, or better, allowing ourselves to be satisfied with half visions and half goals that we can enjoy what I called above a false and facile happiness, and thus rid ourselves of that divine discontent that drives men and women to press forward towards all the greater possibilities that life offers, that lead to a deeper and more meaningful, indeed, more human and less-clam-like kind of happiness.

Back to the question now. Are you really happy with yourself, your situation, or your times? I hope I've made it a little more difficult for you to answer the question for yourself. Again, what I am really asking is: did your education take? Did you just go through

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a prescribed list of courses, for a number of years, to acquire a few letters after your name, without anything really happening to you inside? I'm not assuming that it did happen this way, but for many, this is the sad story.

What should happen to a student in Catholic higher education? To simplify matters, let's stay with the same trilogy of you, and your situation, and your times.

All of us who spend our lives in Catholic higher education know that we are wasting our time unless something very important happens to you, in a sense, that you find yourself in the process, that you somehow confront the really important questions in life and come up with some conviction about the important answers. These answers, to be real, have to show up in your life as values, what you prize, what you live for, what you might be ready to die for.

Nothing has really happened to you if you are today a colorless, neutral, or uncommitted person, if you drift with the crowd, let others do your thinking and form your opinions for you, if you simply fit

comfortably into the mold of what is, instead of seeking and working for what ought to be. In a word, beyond the maturing of the mind and the growth in some special competence which is true of any valid higher education, Catholic higher learning should make you especially conscious of the spiritual and moral dimension of your personal life, the spiritual quality of your goals in time, the relevance of these to your eternity, or as St. Thomas so nicely put it: You should have learned about the right things to have faith in, to hope for, and to love.

Sometimes when I see a young graduate whose vision is circumscribed by a local job that only requires seven or eight hours a day of routine undemanding work for a decent salary, a comfortable house with a comfortable wife and a comfortably-sized family, the usual good measure of fun and games, the comfortable companionship of only comfortable people like himself, with a comfortable spiritual outlook and a comfortable moral commitment to everything mediocre and bourgeois, I am somewhat appalled at this modest, flaccid, unimaginative, unimpressive, and really uneducated result of Catholic higher education. We have no monopoly or copyright on such products, but each one that exists

represents time and talent and dedication wasted.

This is why I ask each of you today: Are you happy with yourself, your values, your goals, your character, your mind and heart and your use of both, your ideals, and your vision of what you can be. If you are both a saint and a scholar, you can afford to be happy with yourself as you are - but you won't be because saints and scholars never are. If you are less than a saint or scholar, you will at least be a little wise if you know that you still have work to do, to be all that you personally might be. I would hope that your Catholic higher education here has lead you to this conclusion about yourself, that you probably have grown intellectually, morally, and spiritually in these past years, but that there is still much to learn and never an end to growing. I believe it was Faulkner who said that man is immortal not just because he expresses himself endlessly, but because he has a soul and a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice.

The second test for you is your reaction to your situation in this world. Are you willing to settle for that kind of life that is safe, secure, unchallenging, really unproductive in time and eternity?

I realize that not everyone can pioneer, or lead, or inspire, or sacrifice greatly - but still in every life there must at least be the hunger for deeper meaning.

Three months ago, I visited a young couple working with the Peace Corps in Chile. I had known them before in graduate school. He was in business - very promising - and she a nurse. Then they decided that they should dedicate a few years of their early married life to something beyond themselves. So today they are in a Chilean town named Los Andes, in the foothills of Cordillera, on the road to the great pass where one sees the statue of Christ of the Andes.

They are doing many things there - starting cooperatives and health programs, organizing community development in a slum of 6,000 people. The tourist crowd on the way to ski in Portilla doesn't see the slum for it is off the main road. They would be shocked at where Pat and Joe are living and working - of their own free will. They would probably think them foolish to be doing this. But then, Pat and Joe told me that these were probably the best years of their lives, that they were coming to know and love each other better than possible

in the easier, safer, more lucrative life at home. Their lives will undoubtedly be richer because of their present poverty; their marriage more secure because of their present insecurity. The good Lord said that we have to lose our lives to find them. How many today in pursuing security lose themselves, never know who they are or might be, what value their lives might have had if they had only dared to be dissatisfied with the safe and the secure and the ordinary way.

If Catholic higher education does not inspire young people to dare, to be different, to give of themselves, to court insecurity for a higher end, then it will have no serious reason to survive. Christ, Our Lord, did not come to proclaim the easy way, the life without challenge. He came to cast fire on the earth. Education that presumes to describe itself as Christian must somehow generate this spark in the lives of those who study under its auspices.

The third and final test that I propose to you is to ask yourselves how you view our times. If you say, "We never had it so well", you are probably correct as observers of the contemporary scene here in America,

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but quite delinquent as members of a world society. Earlier, I observed that you might have been born in a different age where ignorance, or disease, or poverty, or homelessness prevailed. What is perhaps more relevant now is that you have known none of these - but they are still the lot of the majority of the people living today. This is the fact, though it need not be, for now, thanks to modern science and technology, man can be liberated from these ancient bondages.

This liberation will not happen just because it is possible, any more than justice in the whole matter of Civil Rights will come to be in America just because justice is possible. We still need persons who do not simply accept the times, but are willing to do what can be done in these our times. One would hope that Catholic higher education would inspire at least a few who would be willing to challenge the times, to attempt to change that which is into that which should be.

Once more, let it be said that heroes, heroines, and martyrs are not produced wholesale, but if none are produced, then something

is wrong with an educational system that for centuries needed heroes, heroines, and martyrs to exist. So I challenge you today to ask yourself - am I one such? Am I willing to give all I am and all I have to help balance what is and what ought to be?

As I come to this point, we are arriving at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. The place is not important. The name and the person are very important for I believe that the first Catholic President was ever unsatisfied with himself as a person, with his situation, and his times. This led him to do something about all three - to his gain, and to ours, too, as individuals and as a nation.

A Catholic psychologist from Berkeley recently outlined the qualities that a creatively mature person should possess. I quote him to you today, because I believe that his description fits President Kennedy, and outlines a kind of ideal that one could and should expect of graduates of Catholic higher education.

"These (qualities) include self-respect and good sense, personal courage, independence and a sense of humor; good taste, a certain innocence of vision and spontaneity of action; honesty of thought and

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and behavior; social responsibility; and democracy in interpersonal relations. These mature ones should be persons who assumed responsibility for themselves, who treated others decently, and who felt friendly with their own past and unafraid of their future. Finally, they should be able in their own lives to contribute something of human love to the world."

One could comment on each point of this analysis, but you will forgive me if I confine myself to the last point - the matter of your contributing something of human love to the world.

First, a word about the world and you. One of the great central ideas emerging from Vatican Council II is collegiality which, among other things, means that every bishop is responsible not just for his local diocese, but the whole world. One might extend the idea to every Christian. Our concern cannot be restricted to the narrow confines of our own personal life and the few people our life immediately touches. Our interest, our concern, indeed our Christian commitment to justice and charity must encompass, insofar as possible, the whole world.

Centuries ago, Terence wrote of himself in a far less complicated world, *nil humanum mihi alienum* - nothing human is alien to me. How

much more should educated and dedicated Christians embrace this idea today: in a world vastly more populous, more complicated, yet shrunken to a point where no person on earth is more than a day away by jet, a split second away by phone. We are witnessing today unprecedented world revolutions: for human dignity and equality, for human development un hoped for during all previous centuries. Man no longer need be a slave to ignorance - but almost a billion people, a third of the world's population, suffer the mental blindness of illiteracy. No person need be hungry with today's new agricultural technology, yet about half the people in the world are hungry and underfed. No person need endure the debilitating diseases that have plagued mankind since his birth - malaria, trachoma, schistosomiasis, filariasis, and all the rest - yet today, at this moment, hundreds of millions of people are needlessly trapped in the half life and early death that these afflictions bring.

Have these basic hopes of mankind ever reached your heart. One can be a lifelong inhabitant of this world, alive, but like the idols described by the Psalmist in Psalm 113:

"They have mouths but speak not
 They have eyes but see not
 They have ears but hear not
 They have noses but smell not
 They have hands but feel not
 They have feet but walk not
 They utter no sound from their throats."

Is not this the opposite from what was said above, "They should be able in their own lives to contribute something of human love to the world."

Human love in this equation is akin to compassion - the unwillingness to be a mere spectator. During the past Holy Week, an Eastern newspaper carried a cartoon showing a modern man walking away from a crowded street down which Christ staggered under His cross. Someone asked him, as he turned away, "Why?" The answer was typical, if not inspiring: "I just don't want to get involved".

Compassion in today's world means involvement. Where? Wherever educated Christians are needed and wherever they can contribute. In

every community in America, and more deeply throughout the world, the struggle for human equality and human development is in progress. Needless human suffering and anguish are a sad reality everywhere here and, especially, abroad in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. There is a new hope burgeoning on all sides during this new spring for mankind long sunk in hopelessness - but the new hope will be empty, forlorn, and frustrating unless larger numbers of educated Christians open their clam shells, cultivate compassion in their inmost spirits, and begin to weigh the contribution of human love that they can make to the world.

As you graduate today, you face this moment of truth. I have no concern about the intellectual quality of the education you have received. I know that you are qualified or you would not be here to graduate from this fine University. What I am concerned about is the something else that you have or have not acquired here - for this is not just another uncommitted educational institution. The something else transcends knowledge, technical competence, and even ability. It is of the heart, rather than the head. It is a special Christian quality hinted at by St. Paul when he described the pagans as being "without affection".

Our Lord put it directly - in answer to Cain's ancient question: "Am I my brother's keeper?" - when He said, "Whatsoever you do for one of these My least brethren, you do for Me".

You can call it human love, charity, compassion, concern, dedication, involvement, but whatever you call it, you are not a mature or fully educated Christian without it. If Christian higher education gives you everything else, as it should, and still lacks this special quality, this yearning to contribute something of human love to the world, then in the end every other fine quality you possess will sound and fade away like "echoing bronze and clashing cymbals". St. Paul, whose expression this is, followed it with this sentence: "I may have powers of prophecy, no secret hidden from me, no knowledge too deep for me; I may have utter faith so that I can move mountains; yet if I lack charity, I count for nothing." (1 Cor. XIII, 2)

I do not know where your paths will lead each of you in the days ahead. The place to which you go is nowhere near as important as what you do when you get there. My prayer for each of you today, which is also a prayer for all of mankind, is that you have a happy and productive

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life ahead, that all you have learned and will yet learn will profit others as well as yourself, that whatever your work or your place of work, something else happens because you are there -- because you suffer with all who suffer, hope with all who hope, seek justice for all who suffer injustice, give of yourself for the better world aborning, and find in all of this a fuller, happier life. I pray that none of you may be happy as a clam.