

(Remarks made by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the dinner following the Installation of Dr. Roger Gaudry as Rector of the University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada, Saturday, December 11, 1965)

First of all, I would like to associate myself with my companions in honor today to express my personal gratitude and joy at becoming an honorary alumnus of this great University.

Next, insofar as I may presume to speak for all of my colleagues in higher education in the United States, may I speak a special word of congratulations to the new Rector of the University of Montreal, Dr. Roger Gaudry. We wish him all success.

As one who is completing fourteen years in the position inaugurated here today, I can perhaps be forgiven a few words of advice to the new Rector.

There has been a great debate in the United States recently regarding the exact role of a university's chief executive officer. Dr. Clark Kerr, President of the University of California, declared at Harvard last year that the University President -- our term for Rector -- is essentially a mediator. Dr. Kerr outlined the task as one of mediation regarding peace and progress. He indicated that one cannot often have both realities at once, and that if one should have to make a choice, it should be for progress rather than for peace.

This would seem to indicate that a university in progress is seldom a peaceful place, and I am inclined to agree with Dr. Kerr. At least, I think that we should not buy peace at the expense of progress, for it is more important that a university be progressive than peaceful.

More recently, at Princeton, Dr. James Perkins, President of Cornell University, took the discussion a step forward. He seemed to say that the President is more than a mediator of conflicting forces within the university, that his most important function is strong leadership. I find this point of view more congenial to my own ideas -- if it be understood that presidential leadership joins wisdom with courage, wisdom that sees clearly what the university is, and where it must go today, as well as courage to indicate the path leading to the desired goal.

Despite the collective wisdom in all the faculties of a modern university, I do believe that the President can still lead if he sees the vision clearly and is able to articulate his goals with spirit and style. Every human group cedes to strong, intelligent, and courageous leadership. The university is no exception to this rule. Consequently, Mr. Rector, my personal wish and prayer for you today is twofold -- wisdom and courage.

Years ago, when I became President of the University of Notre Dame at the tender age of 35, my predecessor, who had been a great President, gave me sage advice that I will repeat tonight.

1) Administration is mainly making decisions. The way to make good decisions is not to ask what is popular, what is least expensive or least difficult, but what is right. Once you are reasonably certain as to what is right, do it, do it despite everything and everyone who argues for more peaceful and less courageous action.

2) No man is an island. Doing what is right requires enormous help from all involved. The function of leadership is to get everyone, or at least the majority, to share your vision and to help you accomplish it.

3) Do not take yourself too seriously. Many great dreams can be accomplished if you do not care who gets the credit. The important thing is that the university moves forward, not that its Rector is lauded or even loved. If the university does indeed move forward, you will not fare badly in the process -- but the former, not the latter, is really important.

This simple advice seemed wise fourteen years ago. It still seems wise to me today. And so, I pass it along for what it is worth.

Despite all presidential disclaimers to the contrary, the task that awaits you, Mr. Rector, is both honorable and exciting. No one of us responds fully to the honor demanded by the task. However, all of us are better for having tried to measure up. The excitement is almost lethal at times, but as President Harry Truman once said with characteristic honesty, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen".

The Poet Laureate of England said that of all the admirable places in our society, the university is one of the most admirable, because it is the place where the mind of man comes to life and vigor, where the really important issues are debated, where the leadership of the future is formed, where all the great questions of our day are asked, where man achieves his highest dignity, dreams his greatest dreams, and plans his most meaningful endeavors. To preside over such a community of scholars demands the best that is in us. May the good Lord be with you for wisdom to the heights and courage to the depths. May you be a great Rector of a great University.