

(Address given by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at Loyola University, Chicago, Centennial Symposium, "Higher Education: Unity or Diversity", Tuesday, April 7, 1970)

THE STUDENT TODAY

So much has been written lately about students that, by now, everyone must be tired of the subject, especially the students. They have been described, analyzed, lauded, condemned, advised, threatened, but perhaps, least of all, understood.

One should perhaps begin again on that attempt at understanding -- difficult as it is even for those of us who spend our lives with them, difficult, in fact, for students themselves. At least, they realize this as well, if not better, than the rest of us, since they speak so often of their crisis of identity.

I believe that any attempt at understanding them should begin not with them, but with the world in which they have lived and are living. It is a world of enormous flux and change which must have greatly affected them. There has been more change in their lifetime than in any comparable period in the history of the world. In fact, the past twenty years have seen more change than any thousand years in the past.

Just one fact may illustrate this. Since the beginning of mankind until 1950, man had achieved the speed of 500 miles per hour -- the last increment of 450 miles per hour coming during the fifty years

prior to 1950. During their lifetime, this increased to 25,000 miles per hour -- a net increase of fifty times in twenty years.

Their lifetime saw the advent of the computer which made many new endeavors possible, including a trip to the moon -- twenty times beyond the previous greatest travel mileage around the earth. Atomic energy became a commonplace reality for power in their lifetime -- 1600 times more powerful than previous forms of energy. Communications were heightened by television -- unknown before their era. The genetic code was broken with wonderful and horrendous potential. Birth control became a simple possibility, human organic transplants commonplace. Every corner of this globe, which previously had been seen only by intrepid explorers like Livingstone, Stanley, Amundsen, Scott, and Byrd, became the haunts of little old school teachers from Keokuk, Iowa, because of the revolution of jet transport. Even I have stood at the South Pole which Byrd was only able to fly over a few years earlier.

There has been a theological and philosophical revolution as well in their lifetime. Vatican II ushered in more theological change than the previous 400 years. Ecumenism, both within Christianity and between Christianity and other world religions, has seen more progress in the past twenty years than in 1000 years previous. For the first time in 1000 years, a Pope of Rome and the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople (Istanbul) met and embraced in Jerusalem. Never before has there been so much interest in Eastern non-Christian religions.

On the philosophical level, there has been more interest in human equality and human development in the post-war period than in the whole history of mankind beforehand. More money has been spent, more people have dedicated themselves to this effort, more books and studies have been published on this subject than ever before. The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights appeared as most of these students were born. It would have been impossible fifty years earlier.

Within our country, there was the revolution of human rights known mainly as the Civil Rights Movement of the late fifties and the sixties. After eighty years without any Civil Rights legislation whatever, we had successive Federal laws in 1957, 1964, 1965, and 1967. In a very real sense, these laws would not have been possible without the student-sponsored, non-violent revolution inspired mainly by Martin Luther King. After ages of dormant and apathetic acquiescence in injustice, the nation and the nation's youth -- black and white -- suddenly came to life to protest it.

There was also a sudden surge of youthful interest and influence in the political process inspired by Senators McCarthy and Robert Kennedy. We are still recovering from the effects of the Chicago Convention -- however ambiguous and however variously interpreted.

Other revolutions were in progress at the same time -- a sexual revolution that may be more verbal than real, but nevertheless something to be reckoned with in literature, art, drama, and everyday life

and mores. Then there is a crisis of faith, or authority, or leadership, or credibility, or vision, or all of these at once, in the family, in the school, in the Church, in the nation, in the world.

Then there is violence. In its traditional form, this was manifested to our nation in wars: Korean and Vietnam; elsewhere, in the Middle East, in Nigeria, in South America where there are now more military than civilian governments today, in racial conflicts around the world between Chinese and Malays in Malaysia, between Hindus and Muslims in India, between Russians and Chinese, Israeli and Arabs, Africans and Africans. Given the extent and depth of all this violence, one should not be surprised if students were affected by it and involved in it. Indeed they were.

What can one say about a generation of young people who have come of age in such a period? If the whole world has been in cataclysmic and violent change during their brief lifetime, can one hope that they would not be influenced by the change and the violence? If all the normal structures were under abnormal stress, what can we say of those whose lives were developing within those trembling and disintegrating structures? For centuries, young people grew up within stable structures, but this generation has witnessed the questioning, the challenge, the repudiation of much that had previously been taken for granted -- in the family, the state, the Church, the school. To further complicate the problem, in this country a student population that grew, since the beginning of higher education at Harvard in 1636 to three million

in 1950, grew to six and a half million during their lifetime, with all the stresses and instabilities that such rapid growth entails.

I am not sure that anyone really understands the period through which they and we are passing. Certainly, it is unprecedented in the history of mankind heretofore. It is probably of greater moment than the Renaissance, the Reformation, the industrial revolution, or the age of exploration. One might say that so much has been happening, so quickly, that the human circuits are overcharged and all the normal fuses have blown out. A large part of the difficulty of understanding the younger generation today is the very real difficulty of understanding ourselves and the world-in-change in which we all live. If the older generation has difficulty adjusting to rapid and unpredictable and unprecedented change, what of the younger generation which in the past was able to develop against the background of stable structures and unchallenged values of Church and state and family? Given the total situation, one might wonder why the situation isn't worse.

Margaret Mead, in a recent book, "Culture and Commitment", came up with a threefold classification of relationships between the generations, relating to the rate of social change. When the rate of change is slow, as it has been for thousands of years, parents and even grandparents can be models for the children.

When the rate of social or technological change is so rapid that the children can no longer be expected to live lives comparable to their parents, parents are no longer models and their authority is dissipated. Peers become the norms. Here parents can at least share in their children's advance, and facilitate it.

In the third state, our present situation, change is so rapid that parents can neither prepare their children for emancipation nor accept it. Communication between the generations is reversed, parents can and must learn from their children who are more at home in the present world than the parents are. This is at best a most difficult and, up to now, unheard of situation requiring good will and understanding almost beyond comprehension. This is the measure of our present situation.

When one looks sympathetically at the younger generation today, several trends are clearly discernible. At the outset, one should admit that students, like every other group, are not a single reality -- there are the far-out, the great central group, and the conservatives. What I say then can only be taken as a generality, not applicable to all.

First, the younger generation shares the questioning applicable to the age in which we live. They question the values long assumed to be true and absolute, like patriotism linked solely to the military, industrial enterprise as free, liberal, and always on the side of the angels, democracy within which minorities have never had equal liberty and justice, higher education in which research has often outshone teaching, society and bigness of organization leading to impersonalization and alienation, families characterized more by status seeking and social ambition than by human sensitivity and love. In this questioning, the young have become the conscience of the status quo -- a shattering experience for the older generation who have traditionally been the mentors of the young. The rebellion has been heightened by the imaginative rebellion of the young against the standards of the elders -- long hair and sloppy dress, incivility in speech and attitude, feeling substituted

for rationality and dramatized by a drug usage to heighten feeling, bohemianism to shock the elders in the complete repudiation of all they hold sacred and standard.

It has been said that only an affluent culture could provide youth with the means to mount such an offensive against the accepted values of a society. Their parents did not have the financial means to do other than conform and work within the system to survive. This generation enjoys repudiating the system that sustains them.

Are they ingrates? Should they be put to the hard test of work and puritanical values that bred their elders? Should they be roundly condemned for contaminating their nest?

I think not. Possibly they are our salvation in these troubling times when we of the older generation may have too much of the baggage of the past to make the clear-cut decisions that are too easy for the young who bring to our present situation a freshness of the dawn, and unencumbered judgment, a new insight. In saying this, I am not succumbing to the current cult of juvenocracy that says that the young can do no wrong and that they should be followed wherever they lead. They do have insights, idealism, and generosity of spirit -- as the young always have had -- but they have their faults, too -- mainly, naivete, lack of experience and contempt for it, simplistic solutions for very complicated problems, impatience with the time that meaningful change requires.

What I am really proposing is that there is much to be learned and much to be resisted in the thrust that comes to us from the students of today. They are at times very perceptive and at times very stupid;

they have insight and blindness; their idealism is faulted by their inherent lack of discipline, and they are, like all young people of all times, more given to the activism of the moment than to the contemplation and wisdom that make action meaningful.

We cannot really fault them for this, for it is a fault that we all shared at their age, maybe not to the extent that they now manifest it, but they grew up in quite a different age than we did. What I am really seeking is understanding that will somehow take into account all that is valid in what they are saying, with all the other validities that we can bring to their message.

To do this will not be easy, for the older generation has always been impatient and demanding of the younger. Yet, today we are all together seized by the extraordinary exigencies of our times, and we need all the wisdom we can bring to bear upon our problems, be it youthful insight or older wisdom.

Perhaps we might begin by establishing certain givens -- such as human dignity and liberty, the open society, the quality of life characterized by a few fixed values, such as honesty, love, peace or non-violence, competence as opposed to dilettantism, rationality as opposed to blind feeling, spirituality as opposed to materialism, civility as opposed to incivility and vulgarity, respect as opposed to contempt for persons.

If we, young and old, can agree on these basic values that make human life worth living, then perhaps we can pool our efforts, young and old, to redeem the times. It still won't be easy, but it can be done.

What it means is that each of us, young and old, will have to listen more to each other, to respect each other more than we have



heretofore. We will have to learn from each other, to work more in concert to create a better world.

The elders who have thus far compromised to live with violence will now have to question it as the young do. The young who are so enthusiastically given to their often simplistic point of view will have to be more open to hear other points of view -- they will have to listen to Agnew, as well as Mike Rudd, much as this may tax their patience and forbearance.

Above all, we will have to reconsider together the priorities of our national life today: the deep and complicated questions of war and peace, equality of opportunity for all our people and the people of the third world, the state of our cities and the pollution of our total environment, the quality of American life which is so much a function of the quality of American education on all levels, the actual status of the military-industrial complex which is a tiger at our gates to be controlled rather than endured.

It is my solemn judgment that we can undertake this enterprise together, young and old, and do it better together -- each counterbalancing the other -- rather than by confronting each other by extreme approaches. This is not a world of the young or the old, but our world which we share together and need every possible insight if we are to make it humanly habitable.

The older generation today infuriates the younger by projecting this as a world of law and order. I believe we might achieve the best of all worlds by proclaiming to the young that we do not conceive law

and order as ends in themselves, but as a matrix, an environment within which we can best achieve justice and equality of opportunity for all our citizens.

This stance means fundamentally that we do not accept law and order as status quo -- things as they are. One could only do this if ours were a perfect world -- which it is not.

What do the students of today find wrong in our world? Mostly priorities -- as revealed in our national budget. We say that peace is important -- while we spend about half of our budget for war. We have said that we will build 28,000,000 new houses in the ten years beginning in 1968 -- yet last year we spent eighty billions for defense and only eight hundred millions for housing -- 100 times more for defense than housing, despite the fact that millions of our citizens live in condemned and dilapidated housing. We are willing to spend additional billions for an ABM system, while cutting money from education in the name of avoiding inflation. Four presidents in a row have told me that civil rights are our most pressing domestic problem. Yet the budget of the United States Commission on Civil Rights is frozen at \$2,650,000, one-third of the cost of a military fighter aircraft that survives about one week in Vietnam.

By percentage of per capita income, or G.N.P., we are seventh in the world of nations in what we spend to develop mankind, one-half of which must subsist on a family income of \$100.00 a year.

The students ask: Are we really concerned, compassionate, ready to help create a new world, at home and abroad? Here at home we are creating, not what all of them recited in grade school each morning, "One nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" --

but two nations: one black or brown; and one white; one educated, one uneducated; one poor, one affluent; one with hope, and another hopeless.

And abroad, we are concerned more with military alliances than with human development.

Thank God, they are concerned -- we are all too little concerned. They believe in the virtue of compassion for mankind, so often the victim of man's inhumanity to man. They sense that law and order are not possible in a world, or in a nation, or in a university in which there is not a deep concern for justice and equality and the development of a better world.

Granting all their impatience and naivete in the face of tremendously complicated problems, may we at least hope that they will avoid the curse, the vice, the cancer that afflicts so much of modern society. For want of a better English word, we must best describe it by a French word: anomie.

Anomie means restlessness, a spiritual vacuum, a lack of values, a drifting, a complete lack of conviction regarding what is important for our times in the way of priorities, values, or the ultimate meaning of life, individual or societal.

Anomie is all around us today, but generally it has not afflicted them, thank God. Just this week one of our students asked me a very difficult question: "How do you know God, how do you perceive Him, contact Him, relate to Him?"

I told him that God, for me, was Christ Incarnate, fully God, fully man, joining in His person God and man, the hopes, desires, hungers of man with the transcendence of God. And when Christ left us, He promised us the Holy Spirit to abide with us, to guide us, to give us what we find as the recurring theme of St. John's Gospel: life and light -- light to guide us and life to live divinely.

Nothing less is needed to find our way out of the labyrinth of human problems today -- with the light of divine guidance. No anomie here. Rather a sense of compassion, joined to the hope of a better tomorrow -- whatever it may bring in the nature of new challenges, new insights, new demands of divinely inspired human courage. This is the good import of modern student concerns.

We are moving with the rapidity of a new age aborning, almost too fast for any of us to comprehend. But I do believe that together, young and old, communicating and understanding, we can bring to this new age the wisdom ever new and ever old that characterizes the Church and the Christian message and, hopefully, the Christian university.

Anything less than generosity, idealism, and dedication of our total being will not do. Anything less than the wisdom of the ages, joined to the insight of the new age, will not suffice. We need both and both are available. The only real problem is to bring them to bear together on our problems. This, I think, can be done if we only will do it -- with understanding and forbearance, compassion and great

good will on behalf of both the young and the older generation. It was for this task that universities and colleges came to be. May this be their continuing and most important task in the days ahead.

At this point, one might well ask: What is your program? I trust that I have made clear thus far that whatever the program, understanding, cooperation, and good will between the generations are the base of any conceivable program. Beyond this, we are in a completely pioneering stage. We know that we need both young and old, with all their insight and wisdom, within the one institution, the university. We need communication that runs both ways -- questions asked and answered with frankness and sincerity; programs proposed and discussed from both sides of the generation gap; mutual respect for what is brought to bear on the program from young and old, assuming that both points of view have a right to a full and comprehensive hearing. Least of all do we need arrogance from either side. Not at all helpful is the assumption that either the young or the older have nothing to say. The times call for coolness in the modern sense of the word, a willingness to listen as well as to speak, an openness to both sides of a very difficult situation, a modesty that readily recognizes that there is no instant wisdom from either side because we are facing an unprecedented situation in the history of mankind.

Is it possible to have such a conversation today, devoid of recrimination and hardness from either side? I do not know, but I do know that there is no place where it is more possible than in the university which is the one open society available in the world today,

where young and old, student and teacher, are joined in the endeavor of learning. If this is not possible in the university, then there is little hope for our society, little hope for rationality in the face of unbridled emotion, little hope for peace in the face of violence, little hope for civility in the onrush of vulgarity, crassness, and brutality. I place my hope in the university, and in the better majority of young and old who populate and vivify this ancient institution with such great and relevant modern purpose. We face almost insurmountable obstacles from the times, from the spirit of revolution, from the ambiguities of our day, but, ultimately, I believe, we shall overcome, if only because we must, or all hope is lost.

# UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Special Assistant to the President

## MEMORANDUM

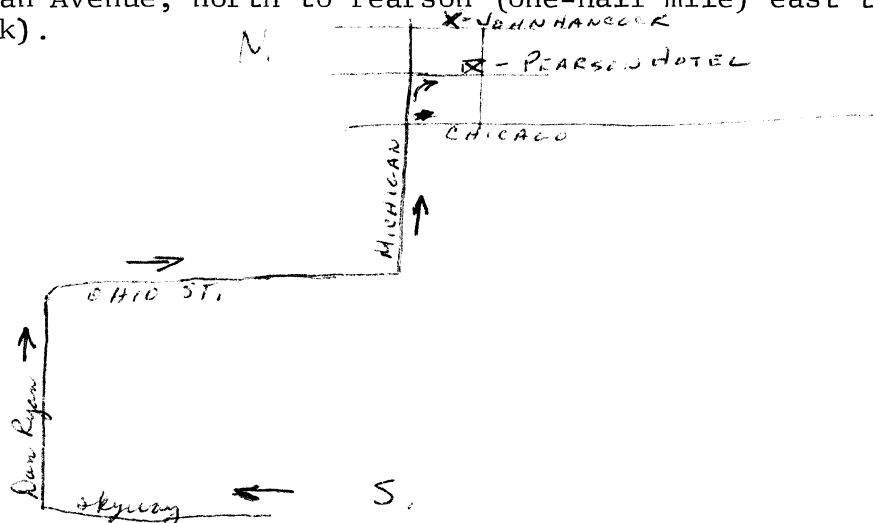
TO: Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.

DATE: April 6, 1970

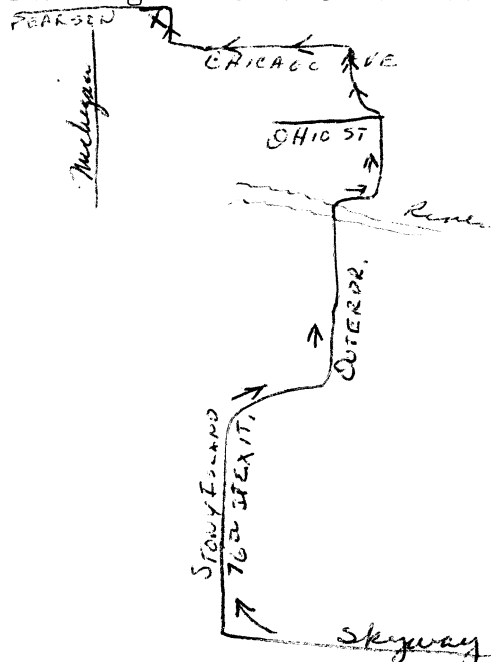
Dear Father Ted:

You are scheduled to go directly to the Pearson Hotel where you will be picked up by Loyola for transportation to the Lake Shore campus. The Pearson Hotel, 190 East Pearson is one block north of Chicago Avenue (800 North) and one block east of Michigan Avenue. Its one-half block east of the new John Hancock building.

If driving, your best route is Dan Ryan Expressway to Ohio Street, east to Michigan Avenue, north to Pearson (one-half mile) east to Hotel (one block).



Or if you prefer, take 76th Street exit from the Skyway, to the Outer Drive, get off at Ohio Street and follow inner drive to Chicago Avenue, turn left at Chicago Avenue and go west to one block before Michigan Avenue, turn right one block to Hotel.





Knowledge in the service of man

# Higher Education: Unity or Diversity

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FIFTH CENTENNIAL SYMPOSIUM

—

Loyola University  
of  
Chicago

Kathleen Mullady Memorial Theatre  
Centennial Forum  
6525 North Sheridan Road

Monday Through Wednesday, April 6, 7, 8, 1970



- 8:10 pm     **A Different Drummer**  
**John Hurt Fisher**  
*Executive Secretary, Modern Language Association*
- 8:50 pm     **Break**
- 9:05 pm     **Academic Freedom: For Whom and For What?**  
**George W. Beadle**  
*President Emeritus and William E. Wrather Distinguished  
Service Professor, University of Chicago*
- 9:45 pm     **Discussion**
- Rosemary Park**  
*Vice Chancellor, Student and Curricular Affairs  
University of California at Los Angeles*
- Sister Ann Ida Gannon**  
*President, Mundelein College*

**TUESDAY, APRIL 7**

**AFTERNOON AND EVENING**

**SESSION THREE**

- 1:30 pm     **STUDENT PARTICIPATION:**  
**A SEARCH FOR RESPONSIBILITY**  
Chairman  
**Thomas M. Kennedy**  
*Professor of Psychology and Director of Psychological  
Services, Loyola University of Chicago*
- The Student Today**  
**Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.**  
*President, University of Notre Dame*
- 2:15 pm     **Black Studies: The New Dimension in Higher Education**  
**James Turner**  
*Associate Professor and Director of Africana Studies  
and Research Center, Cornell University*
- 2:55 pm     **Break**
- 3:10 pm     **A Search for Fulfillment**  
**William S. Winn**  
*Loyola University of Chicago Undergraduate Student*
- 3:50 pm     **Discussion**
- Lloyd S. Michael**  
*Professor of Education, Northwestern University*
- George Van Dusen**  
*Loyola University of Chicago Graduate Student*
- 4:45 pm     **Dinner Break**