(Remarks made by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, in response to the presentation of the Alexander Meiklejohn Award for Academic Freedom by the American Association of University Professors, Los Angeles, California, April 25, 1970)

Mr. Chairman,

I find it difficult to express adequately how very pleased, honored, and grateful I am to receive the Alexander Meiklejohn Award. May I also accept it in large measure as an award to the University of Notre Dame, and to all my academic associates there who cherish the implications of this award every bit as much as I do. My gratitude is to your whole association in general, and to our Notre Dame Chapter of the AAUP in particular, for they have ever been generous and staunch allies. There has never been any doubt about where they stood whenever there was the slightest doubt that academic freedom might be jeopardized on our campus or in our country. Theirs has been a strength that has always been strongly communicated to our total academic community.

This year I am completing twenty-five years at Notre Dame as a faculty member and administrator. These years have seen many and profound changes at Notre Dame and throughout American higher education. Most of us have been so busy looking forward that we have had all too few occasions to look backward, even to the fairly recent past. We hear often that our students think history began yesterday, and I fear we sometimes act as if they were right.

The Alexander Meiklejohn Award for Academic Freedom calls our attention to at least two things: First, that academic freedom is by no means a new concern in higher education. Safeguarding academic freedom has been a constant struggle in higher education since universities began and, in the broader sense, since men began to teach one another. In this connection, may I congratulate the American Association of University Professors on its eternal vigilance. I should like to say another word later on the special need for that vigilance today. Secondly, the award, by its very name, reminds us that American higher education has been blessed in its history with a number of educational giants, men of exceptional vision, energy, and talent to whom we are all greatly indebted. Alexander Meiklejohn is included among them. Lawrence Veysey in his brilliant book, The Emergence of the American University, writes, "In 1912 Meiklejohn was to become president of Amherst College and in that role mark out some of the fundamental directions for liberal education during succeeding decades". (p. 211)

I note from the list of previous winners of this award that I am the first representative of a Catholic university to be so honored. As a priest and theologian, I thought I might say just a word about the special meaning that academic freedom has for us in a Catholic university. (Incidentally, in 1967 we published at Notre Dame a book on this precise subject. It's title is Academic Freedom and the Catholic University.) Perhaps because of certain historical

misunderstandings, we in the Catholic universities particularly are more sensitive to possible infringements on academic freedom than those who have not shared the same experiences and fought the same battles.

Academic freedom, like all freedom, is grounded ultimately in the nature of man and of society and of the development of knowledge and intelligence. Man's greatest genius and dignity, as well as his last best hope, are in his intellect and in his search for truth. In an imperfect and fallible world, man cannot, in fact, be man -- he cannot be true to himself -- unless he is free to follow any argument, any research, any point of inquiry, wherever it may lead. Those in the academy must be free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students, in their teaching and in their writing, without fear of reprisal.

Even if it should want to, which, of course, it does not, the Church could not impose its theological system on anyone. To accept the teaching of the Church is a free act or it is nothing at all. There is no conflict between the goals of the Church and those of the university. These goals and objectives, in fact, complement one another. As was pointed out by Vatican Council II: "..... the Church recalls to the mind of all that culture must be made to bear on the integral perfection of the human person, and on the good of the community and the whole of society. Therefore, the human spirit must be cultivated in such a way that there results a

growth in its ability to wonder, to understand, to contemplate, to make personal judgments, and to develop a religious, moral, and social sense." (The Documents of Vatican II. Walter M. Abbott, General Editor. The American Press, 1966, p. 265)

At the close of Vatican Council II, it seemed important to me -- in another capacity as President of the International Federation of Catholic Universities -- to have Catholic universities worldwide clarify their commitment to academic freedom. We began by a meeting of North American representatives at Notre Dame's retreat in Northern Wisconsin. This resulted in what has come to be known as the 1967 Land O'Lakes Statement. May I quote three short passages from that statement:

> "The Catholic university today must be a university in the full modern sense of the word, with a strong commitment to and concern for academic excellence. To perform its teaching and research functions effectively, the Catholic university must have a true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay or clerical, external to the academic community itself. To say this is simply to assert that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are essential conditions of life and growth and indeed of survival for Catholic universities as for all universities."
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> "In a Catholic university all recognized university areas of study are frankly and fully accepted and their

internal autonomy affirmed and guaranteed. There must be no theological or philosophical imperialism; all scientific and disciplinary methods, and methodologies, must be given due honor and respect. However, there will necessarily result from the interdisciplinary discussions an awareness that there is a philosophical and theological dimension to most intellectual subjects when they are pursued far enough. Hence, in a Catholic university there will be a special interest in interdisciplinary problems and relationships."

"The student must come to a basic understanding of the actual world in which he lives today. This means that the intellectual campus of a Catholic university has no boundaries and no barriers. It draws knowledge and understanding from all the traditions of mankind; it explores the insights and achievements of the great men of every age; it looks to the current frontiers of advancing knowledge and brings all the results to bear relevantly on man's life today. The whole world of knowledge and ideas must be open to the student; there must be no outlawed books or subjects. Thus the student will be able to develop his own capabilities and to fulfill himself by using the intellectual resources presented to him."

Concurrently with our Wisconsin meeting, other regions of the Federation met in Paris, Bogota, and Manila, and the following

Summer all together for the Eighth General Conference of the Federation at Lovanium University in Kinshasa, Congo. To give you a flavor of this meeting, I shall only cite one paragraph of my Presidential Address:

> "The university, therefore, is the very quintessence of the pilgrim Church in the intellectual order, seeking answers to ultimate questions in concert with men of intelligence and good will, drawing on all knowledges and every way of knowing and, especially, bringing every philosophical and theological insight to bear upon the monumental task at hand, whatever the source of these insights. This is no task for amateurs or dilettantes, nor for second-rate scholars or institutions less than first class. It is not a task that can be done without that intellectual climate of freedom that is the essential atmosphere of a university's research program, especially in theology. It is not something that can be accomplished in the face of arbitrary controls from outside the university's professional community of researchers and scholars."

I would like to add to all these fine words that academic freedom does not live by rhetoric alone. Each year brings its new crisis. When the battle seems newly won, hostilities break out on another front. It is not so much that freedom is fragile as that it must be won daily, and exercised daily and responsibly, by

each one of us. Ignazio Silone puts it well in his book, Bread and Wine:

> "Freedom is not something you get as a present .... You can live in a dictatorship and be free -- on one condition: that you fight the dictatorship. The man who thinks with his own mind and keeps it uncorrupted is free. The man who fights for what he thinks is right is free. But you can live in the most democratic country on earth, and if you're lazy, obtuse, or servile within yourself, you're not free. Even without any violent coercion, you're a slave. You can't beg your freedom from someone. You have to seize it -- everyone as much as he can." (P. 43, Signet Classic, New American Library, New York, 1963)

What Silone says of a person is also true of each institution. Which raises two most central questions for each of us and for each of our institutions today. I do not pretend to know the full answers, but I will pose the questions:

1) Are we making the best use of our academic freedom today? and 2) Is the world around us developing a climate in which our freedom within will be increasingly disrespected, threatened, diminished, and, if possible, extinguished from without? I believe that the two questions are not unrelated. In fact, if we answer the first question badly, we almost guarantee a bad answer to the second question.

As to the first, we need often to be reminded that academic freedom is not so much freedom from somebody or something, as freedom to do something, which raises the whole question of what universities should be doing today with their freedom. Alexander Meiklejohn might come back to haunt me if I did not insist here that we use our freedom to do something really creative and imaginative to reform and revivify liberal education which should be at once the guarantee and the crowning achievement of academic freedom. But beyond this urgent and general task that faces us, what of the particular use of our freedom to view our society critically and to exercise our best moral judgment on a whole host of pressing modern topics: The sacredness of human life, the dignity of man, human rights and human equality, the uses of science and technology, war and peace, violence and non-violence, human as well as physical pollution, the quality, meaning, condition, and effectiveness of academic life, academic commitment, academic protest or protestation or, at times, posturing as we confront these vital issues which ~~at times~~ seem more important to our students than they do to us. I am not suggesting the politization of the university, but as a professional class of university men and women, do we effectively bring to our times the wisdom, the insight, the courage, and the moral judgment that should characterize our profession?

As to the second question, I would remind you that as recently as last week a majority of Americans in a CBS News nation-wide poll appeared willing to cancel five of the ten guarantees of

our Bill of Rights. As James Reston has observed, "The uses of physical violence against the people, property, and institutions of the United States in defiance of the law have created a climate of fear in the country, and under the dominion of fear, a great many people now seem willing to choose order at the expense of their liberties, or at least at the expense of somebody else's liberties." (New York Times, April 19, 1970)

The times call for vision and leadership to an extraordinary degree, and hope as well. The French have a saying that "fear is a poor counselor". I suppose that the obverse of that is a call to each of us to use our freedom with courage and, hopefully, with wisdom.