

(Address given by the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Commencement Exercises, Anderson College, Anderson, Indiana, June 15, 1970)

In 1917, the year I was born four days before John Kennedy, Joseph T. Wilson, a Church of God minister, became President of the Gospel Trumpet Company, founded by Daniel Sidney Warner, here in Anderson. Wilson was a very unusual evangelist because, unlike the anti-intellectual tendency of the church in that day, he believed deeply in education. To quote from John Morrison's delightful book, As the River Flows: "To start an institution of learning as such would have been out of the question. Wilson knew that, so as President of the Company, he organized an Educational Department. In this way he could, as it were, bootleg education in ..... They set up a program of education and called it the Anderson Bible Training School, with Wilson the principal ..... This embryonic institution opened its doors for the first time on October 2, 1917, in the chapel of the then Gospel Trumpet Home, now Old Main of Anderson College." (p. 124)

Morrison knows whereof he speaks because, as a young Missouri school teacher-minister, he was invited by Wilson in 1919 to come to Anderson and manage the Education Department. Against strong church opposition, Morrison changed the Bible School into a college and gave diplomas starting the year he came to Anderson.

In the year I came to Notre Dame as a freshman, 1934, the College again survived a move by the Ohio segment of the church, to close it. I am sure that the credit for its survival against the

anti-educational forces is a tribute not only to President Morrison, but also Dean Olt whom Morrison brought to Anderson in 1924 and with whom he worked together for 33 years.

The next biggest hurdle they faced together was North Central accreditation which they first sought in 1942 and finally achieved in 1946. This episode brings Anderson and Notre Dame together in a way that is again best described by President Morrison in his book cited above:

"In our struggle to get accreditation, we received encouragement and guidance from some of our neighboring colleges in Indiana. Strange as it may appear to some, Notre Dame, the great Catholic institution north of us, gave us assistance. Especially helpful was Father William F. Cunningham, of the Notre Dame faculty. At that time, he was a member of the Board of Review of North Central Association and was thus in a position to give us guidance. He visited the campus a number of times and spoke in chapel. On one of his visits we had a luncheon in his honor at the college attended by a group of our staff. Thoughtlessly, our food service people served pork, even though it was the season of Lent. We were much embarrassed, and scurried around and cooked up something that he could eat with a clear conscience. When the meal was finished, he produced a long pipe from his pocket and filled its empty stomach with tobacco. From the first, Anderson College has maintained a tradition of

no smoking in college buildings. Just how to handle a situation like this is anybody's guess. So I said loudly enough to be heard by all the group, 'Well, Father Cunningham, we offended you with our pork, and now you have offended us with your pipe. So we are even.' He saw the humor of it and returned his pipe to his pocket, all in good spirit." (p. 187)

I would like to believe that my being here tonight is yet another chapter in the stirring history of Anderson College, especially because Father Bill Cunningham, now deceased, was not only a friend of your College, but one of my dearest friends in the years following my return to Notre Dame to teach in 1945. Your good President, Robert Reardon, has sensed and graciously recognized the tradition in inviting me tonight.

While our schools spring from widely differing religious traditions, they do indeed have much in common. They were both begun, against great adversity, by men of great faith in Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our founder, Father Edward Sorin, was cast from the same pioneer mold as President Morrison. Both had great hope for their schools, and neither would grow weak in faith, whatever the opposition to their dreams. I am sure that your first Academic Dean Olt and Father William Cunningham became as thick as thieves when it came to plotting for the successful accreditation of Anderson, a task no easier at an earlier period for Notre Dame. Our founder

first wanted to found a school in Vincennes, Indiana, but the religious leader there told him -- we already have one, so he had to seek a more hospitable location in Northern Indiana.

We are both the inheritors of the faith and hope of men like this. Might we not likewise, as good Christians, match their past faith and hope by our present mutual love which respects our honest differences and yet allows us to love each other as we are. Here again, I might quote your first President Morrison: "O Religion, Religion, thou vehement proclaimer of love, how canst thou show forth so little of that which thou dost proclaim." (p. 92, ibid.) May we today do better.

Because love is active, in deed and in truth, as St. John says in his first Epistle, I would like to take as my theme tonight a new sense of Christian love which our students today deeply share with your students. Your program is called Tri-S (Student Summer Service), ours is CILA (a Commission in service to Latin America).

One hears much today about the generation gap, the lack of understanding between the young and the old. I believe that in the notion of Christian service, as prayer in the modern context, we will find a great bridge across that gap -- something that both young and old can understand, something in which we can participate together and mutually cherish. Moreover, this is the strongest tradition of the Church of God.

I might best begin to implement my theme by quoting a great Protestant theologian and musician and doctor and humanitarian, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who left several promising careers behind him in Europe to bury himself in Lambarene, an obscure spot on a turgid river in what was then French Equatorial Africa, so that he might serve the forgotten Africans there.

Dr. Schweitzer once spoke to a group such as you students. I've lost the text so that I shall paraphrase it as I remember his words:

"I do not know where you are going, or what you will do in life, but I do know this: that you will never fulfill your potential or be really happy as human persons until you have learned how to serve your fellow man, especially in his human needs, wherever you go, whatever you do."

Here is an older man who really says something he has practiced and that qualifies him to come through to you. His advice is not different than that of Our Lord's to pray always. When we serve, for Christian reasons, we pray by our very lives.

Let me illustrate this in a context that is of your generation. Our CILA group of students at Notre Dame spend the Summer in Latin America doing a variety of tasks to help the unfortunate there, much as you do with your Tri-S. You may be surprised to learn that one of these students a few years ago was the captain of that year's National Championship football team, Jim Lynch.

One of Jim's companions, whom I shall not name, as this is a highly personal incident, had a real crisis of faith and a real moment of inspiration while working down there in Latin America -- a kind of personal prayer growing out of despair and anguish. He was walking to his duty station early one morning, along the shore of Lake Titicaca in the altiplano of Peru near Puna. The early morning mists were rising from the water and he was shivering in the high altitude chill which bites to the bone.

As he passed a miserable Indian hut, a little girl ran out to see him. He got down on one knee to talk to her, which was difficult because, like her Inca ancestors she spoke mostly Quechua and very little Spanish. He was shaken by what he saw, a small creature with only a rag of a dress against the cold, hungry, poor, running nose and bare feet, cut off from all the culture of the past and the promise of the future. Her future lot was a miserably hard life and an early death.

How can there be a God, he thought, if she and millions like her are cut off from all the good things of life that I and so many others take for granted? How can we believe that the Lord Jesus came to save her if she will never know Him or His good message of salvation?

Then it came to him that God or Jesus had to come to her through others like himself, that his education and his profession -- he hoped to be a doctor -- were both a personal service to humanity and a personal prayer to Our Lord who said: "Whatsoever you do for

one of these, my least brethren, you did it to Me. For I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, thirsty and you gave Me to drink, naked and you clothed Me, in prison and you visited Me."

Education, profession, service, prayer -- all become something infinitely more important to that young student that morning -- and all because of a little Indian girl, a chance encounter, a compassionate heart, and, of course, the saving grace of God, the Spirit who breathes where He will, this time by the shore of a lake, again in the early morning, not Galilee but Titicaca, but again a young man who, like St. John, was able to say in deepest recognition: "It is the Lord,"

Now let me back up and come around by a different direction. There are a lot of very learned professors today who are so much enamored of the secular world that they take a very dim view of your College and of my University, insofar as they are Christian. One of them, Dr. Harvey Cox, has said that the very attempt to create Christian colleges in America was bankrupt before it began. Some of the early churchmen agreed with him, but I think, no more.

I can argue with his idea, but in the last analysis, only you can disprove it -- because you, in your most secular generation are products of a Christian college. If there is nothing different or distinct about you or your lives, nothing of special value for this secular world that is given special witness because of what you have learned here, then people will believe that maybe he is right and that Anderson College and Notre Dame ought to close their doors or change their whole approach to education.

Young people today are, I believe, fiercely honest, very sincere, and suspicious of empty double talk. At least, I take you to be such, so I shall lay out very explicitly what I think should especially characterize those who have studied here all the secular subjects studied everywhere else, but in a Christian context here. I put the case in three words: Commitment, compassion, and consecration.

Commitment. In many ways, this is a bad word today. Young people are told to be cool, which I take to be a modern way of saying, uncommitted. But I cannot for the life of me see how the convinced Christian can be cool in the face of Our Lord's life and words and Passion and Death and Resurrection. He said, "You are either with Me or against Me." He said: "I have compassion on the multitude." He said: "Take up your cross and follow Me." "Love each other as I have loved you."

We must, of course, do all of this in the modern context, meeting Him and serving Him and loving Him wherever we find and serve our fellow man in his material or spiritual needs. It may be in a classroom, in a sickroom, on an airplane, on a battlefield, at a party, even on the shores of Lake Titicaca. But we will never meet Him or serve Him or love Him in any Christian sense unless we are committed deeply to Him as our Saviour, and to His words as our deepest inspiration, and to His grace as our deepest need, and, of course, to prayer as our living daily contact with Him, the prayer of thought, word, and deed. And, of course, we always need the

inspiration and vision and courage that comes from the Holy Spirit to do this as He wishes.

Mankind is served today for a variety of other reasons ranging from secular humanism to material gain. But if there is to be a Christian presence in this world, it must be manifested quietly, efficiently, competently, and generously by educated persons who are committed to Christ Our Savior, as well as to science, to medicine, to education, to all the secular forms of truth. This is a very special challenge to you -- to serve better, more generously, more wholeheartedly, more humanely -- because you are committed, because you believe that in serving others you are serving Christ -- and that is your prayer, too.

Compassion. This means that you have the capacity to suffer with those who suffer -- whatever they suffer -- physical pain, yes, but many other more difficult sufferings -- injustice, loneliness, spiritual desolation, ignorance, blindness, passion, and all the rest. The compassionate do not condemn, do not patronize, do not look down from on high -- they understand, they put out the helping hand, they bring Christ and they touch Christ in understanding and helping others. All the social service in the world is sterile and antiseptic and inhumane without compassion. All the education and professional service in the world is less effective if compassion does not enable it to get beyond the problem down to the person who is suffering. Even the homely realities, like marriage and family and neighborhoods, are somewhat empty without the personal component.

of compassion. And if one can study all the subjects that our Christian colleges and universities offer and emerge without compassion for all the personal suffering all around us in the world today, then we really have not lived up to the ideal that brought these institutions into being, the great dreams of their founders. Here again, you are the truest test. You alone can make the greatest promise of your College true or false.

Consecration. This last test I put to you graduates today really summarizes everything else said thus far. Let us begin by admitting that the world as God made it is good, as He declared it to be. We need not be afraid of the world, or of ourselves, for we are God's creation. Consecration simply means that we recognize all that is true and good and beautiful in this world, and in ourselves, and that we consciously consecrate all this to Him. This is the opposite of secularization that, in a sense, consecrates the world to man instead of to God. Not that we Christians should cherish the world and man any less than the secularist -- we should cherish them and serve them even more in our act of consecrating ourselves and our world to God in prayer and service, which can be the same thing.

Now what does this mean to each of you? I return to Dr. Schweitzer and the Notre Dame student -- no one, probably not even you, knows what life has in store for you after your graduation today. You cannot begin to guess all the places you will be, all the things you will do in the years ahead. All of this is really

not too important in its specificity and particularity. What is ultimately important is the spirit and the spiritual vitality that fill your life, wherever you are, whatever you do, the sense of consecration that inspires you and your life. Consecration means to make sacred. Whatever the claims of secularists in our day, I claim that there is nothing good, or true, or beautiful in your life, no human reality, no hour or day or year of yours that cannot be made sacred, a precious moment in the whole long history of the world's salvation and your own, if you really want to make it so.

Someone wrote some time ago that you should cherish your college for you will never know what heartbreak, what sacrifice, what idealism, and what vision made it possible. I can think of no greater means of cherishing your College than to make of your whole life, from this day forward, a conscious act of commitment, compassion, and consecration. Nothing less will make the years that you have spent here worthwhile. Nothing more is needed to make of this graduation day a great reward to all those who rejoice with you today -- your parents, your teachers, and yours truly who is so happy to have had the wonderfully ecumenical opportunity of joining your graduating class the easy way -- by an honorary degree and these few moments of trying to say to you what to me makes life worthwhile -- to any generation in any age, once Christ the Lord was born to be our Savior, our Ideal, and our ever-present Inspiration along all the paths and byways of life. May the good Lord bless and keep you always in His care, and may your service to God and man, to God through man, be

an inspiration to all who cross your path through life. This was my deepest prayer for all of you at Holy Mass this morning, and will continue to be my prayer for you, my classmates, across all the years yet to come. God bless and keep all of you, and Anderson College, too.

Anderson College

FIFTY-SECOND

Annual Commencement



Eight o'clock  
MONDAY EVENING, JUNE FIFTEENTH  
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY  
WARNER AUDITORIUM

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# PROGRAM

ORGAN SELECTIONS . . . Mrs. David Coolidge, *Organist*

Two Extended Chorales from Church Cantatas . . . *J. S. Bach*

“Let Heaven and Earth Rejoice”

“Sleepers Wake! A Voice Is Calling”

“Carillon de Westminster” . . . . . *L. Vierne*

PROCESSIONAL: “Trumpet Tune in D Major” *D. Johnson*  
(Audience seated)

THE NATIONAL HYMN: “My Country, 'Tis of Thee”

My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing:  
Land where my fathers died, Land of the pilgrims' pride,  
From every mountainside, Let freedom ring!  
My native country, thee, Land of the noble free, Thy name I

**love:**

I love thy rocks and rills, Thy woods and templed hills;  
My heart with rapture thrills Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze, And ring from all the trees Sweet  
freedom's song:

Let mortal tongues awake; Let all that breathe partake;  
Let rocks their silence break, The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee, Author of liberty, To Thee we sing:  
Long may our land be bright With freedom's holy light;  
Protect us by Thy might, Great God, our King!

PRAYER . . . . . Rev. James Earl Massey  
*Campus Minister, Anderson College*

ADDRESS . . . . . Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.  
*President, University of Notre Dame; Chairman,  
United States Commission on Civil Rights*

SALUTE TO SENIORS . . . . . Richard G. Lugar  
*Mayor, City of Indianapolis*

PRESIDENT'S CHARGE TO THE SENIORS

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