

Eulogy Delivered by
The Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C. S. C.,
President of Notre Dame University
at the Memorial Service for
Charles S. Jones
at the
Church of the Recessional, Forest Lawn Memorial Park
Glendale, California
on
December 12, 1970

My dear friends, before beginning the service this morning, I would like to read for you a telegram which just arrived from the President of the United States. Those of you who know President Nixon can read between the lines of this telegram and see that it was certainly done by his hand.

"The productive life of Charles Jones combined the finest traditions of American business with the highest ideals of public service and civic achievement.

"His profound beliefs and ready ability to translate principles into action won him admiration and respect, not only in California but throughout the nation. His strength of character and soundness of judgment made him sought out by Presidents and leaders in every walk of life. He showed courage in his convictions, discretion in disagreements and selflessness in service to his country.

"I had the great privilege of having the benefit of his personal friendship and his wise counsel for all the years I have been in public life, win or lose. He was one of those rare individuals who made his friendship known even more openly when I lost than when I won.

"His courage and indomitable spirit during his last difficult illness was an inspiration to me and all others who had the privilege of seeing him in those days.

"It is perhaps trite to put it this way but, however you measure a man, Charlie Jones has to be rated as one of the greatest."

Signed Richard Nixon

My dear friends, I would like to begin this morning a very simple memorial service by reading the gospel of the requiem mass that I and a few friends offered for Charles earlier this morning.

This scene is Bethany outside of Jerusalem, down that long, hot road on the way to the Dead Sea in Jericho, and Jesus has just arrived in Bethany, having heard of the death of Lazarus, his good friend. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs away, many of the Jews had gone out there to comfort Martha and Mary over the loss of their brother. Martha, when she heard that Jesus had come, went out to meet him, while Mary sat in the house. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you hadst been here my brother would not have died, and I know well that even now God will grant whatever you ask of him." "Thy brother," Jesus said to her, "will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know well enough that he will rise again at the resurrection when the last day comes." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me even though he is dead will live on, and whosoever has life and has faith in me, to all eternity, cannot die. Doest thou believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I have learned to believe that thou art the Christ, thou art the Son of the Living God, it is for thy coming that the world has waited." And with that she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Master is here," she said, "and bids thee come."

We are all gathered here this morning to pay a final and well-deserved tribute to Charles Stone Jones. It might seem strange to you that this tribute is being delivered for a Texas Baptist by a Catholic Priest from Notre Dame. I have a simple explanation. Fifteen years ago, just at this time of year, I was first introduced to Charles Jones by another Texas Baptist and good mutual friend, Mr. C. R. Smith. And for the last decade and a half, we have spent the Christmas holidays together, their contention being that a Catholic Priest can only have a restful vacation if spent with Protestants and preferably Texas Baptists. The initial contact was not as simple as it seems from this account. Charlie loved to tell the tale, and I am sure he would love me to tell it to you today in his own words. Charles always said that C. R. in his usual abrupt way simply phoned him, Jones, and said he had invited another guest on the Christmas

safari to Baja California. To Jones's query, man or woman, Smith simply said, "Catholic Priest." "My God," said Jones, and he wasn't praying, "have you forgotten about our fishing and hunting language." "Forget it," said Smith. Jones finally consented. "Well C. R.," he said, "if he can stand you, I guess he can stand me." As it turned out, I didn't just stand him, like so many of his thousands of friends I grew to love him dearly, at times despite himself. He could be like a large bear with a sore paw, but he was over the long pull the best of friends and a very lovable bear at that, with a heart as large as a lion's and every bit as courageous. I recall so well being at his bedside at a New York hospital a few years ago when the doctor showed him the latest x-rays of his leg and told him that his left leg would have to come off above the knee as soon as possible. Charles just winked at me and said, "As we say at Notre Dame, doctor, let's get the show on the road." And the doctor said, "Alright, sometime tomorrow." I remember rather sadly getting up to St. Patrick's Cathedral the next morning in New York and offering mass for Charlie that his courage would keep up. I learned later in the day with great joy that the doctor had decided to try one last new technique, which happily worked very well.

Like so many pioneers of every sort, the kinds of people who have characterized the history and growth of America, the mold was broken after the unusual events of Charles Jones's career had formed him and his life style and his character. If you put a casual title on his life today, it might be, "It's a long way from Bonham, Texas," the fly-blown, dry and dusty, poor and threadbare Texas of his youth. In a book he wrote last year on the genesis of the oil industry that gave birth to his beloved Richfield, he said it was all due to a Mexican bandit named Zapata. Personally, I don't believe that little bit of romance. Richfield more than anything else, except perhaps the little creatures that turn to oil, was due to Charles Jones, to his vision, to his organizing ability, to his energy, and to his unflinching dedication. Just as one illustration of his vision, he was sure that there was oil on the North Slope of Alaska, long after the Navy's survey team had given up on it, and long before oil was struck at Prudhoe Bay.

Charles Jones was a man who grew with the industry, as the industry grew with him. And Charles and I had one great endeavor in common; namely, education. He spent his whole life educating himself and educating everyone around him. He was seized by an enormous curiosity that never ceased to be nurtured by the wonder of God's creation. How many young men, trained in accounting, can tick off the Latin nomenclature for a wide variety of plants and animals, birds and fish.

How many today teach themselves geology, astronomy, art, navigation, history, chemistry, international politics, botany, zoology, ecology, Spanish, and how to play the guitar. A few may do the latter, but very few the former.

I remember arguing with Charles one day in Mexico about the virulence of snake bites, specifically rattlesnake bites. In the middle of the discussion he abruptly disappeared into his room and emerged with a two-volume study on the subject that proved him to be very right and me to be very wrong. For my penance I had to read the two volumes, and found, to my surprise, that he had financed the study at Cal Tech because rattlesnakes were becoming a menace to many of his people who were working along the oil pipelines. Charlie's curiosity was insatiable, so his education continued until the day he died.

I wish I could tell you that Charles was a fervant, Church-going Christian. The best I can do on this point is to assure you that he helped to build a church for some Mexican rancheros who never had one and that for the past fifteen Christmas Eves he attended midnight mass there, with some pride and joy in the fact that it meant a lot to them and that somehow he was sharing their joy in prayer on this occasion. I can assure you, however, that Charles Jones was a practicing Christian in the only way in which the good Lord tells us we are to be judged, when he said, "I was hungry and you gave me to eat, and I was thirsty and you gave me to drink, and I was naked and you clothed me, and whensoever you did this for my least brethren, you did it for me."

The charity of Charles Jones was unobtrusive, it was imaginative, and abundantly given from the goodness of his heart that had no desire for praise in doing good. He could fairly chew out his Mexican Mayordomo in public on one day and then offer privately the next day to put the same man's son through school in the States. Charles was very touchy about anything phony in the area of religion. But very demanding of himself in being good and generous to others. He was infinitely faithful to his family and friends, sticky at times but still faithful to the end. I was never sure he was joking when he would turn to me in the boat during a long lull in the fishing and say, "Isn't it about time you started to pray, Father?"

He always arranged when I was his guest so that I had time for, and privacy for prayer, and I think he would have been very disappointed in me if I had neglected my daily prayers or my other Priestly obligations. On this point he was almost a Puritan. He had a good conscience for me.

Then there were the terribly sincere moments when after bluing the air with blasphemy, he would turn to me and say quite simply, almost like a child, "Excuse me Father, I am sorry." He didn't have to and he knew that, but he did. I don't know how many hundreds or thousands of people across the world are better today because of his great kindness, generosity and spirit. I know I am, and I rather imagine that all of you are too, or you wouldn't be here today to honor his memory.

If it is still a long way from Texas of the last century to California today, a long road that he trod with dignity and honor and a style all his own, I should add that his faithful wife, Genny, trod it with him and shared his anguishes as well as his triumphs. They spent his last day on earth together, reminiscing on the length and breadth of that road across fifty-five years of marriage with all its joys and sorrows and the love that spanned the years too.

Everyone will have his or her special memory of Charles Stone Jones, depending upon where or when they happen to know him. I would like to share my best memory of him with you, and I am sure it's a memory shared by a few of his friends. There is a very special estuary named after St. Margaret by some unknown explorer who discovered its lonely beauty near the southern end of that long peninsula, Baja California, along the Pacific side. On one of the estuary bays across from a fishing village called Matancitas, there is a sandy strip, high in the center but sloping into the estuary waters on the northern side. The only real landmark on the beach there is a clump of mangroves in which Charlie hacked out three or four shooting blinds, facing the decoy position in the water of the Bay beyond the mangrove shoreline. My remembrance of Charlie is to see him sitting there in the worst of the four blinds, having characteristically given the best ones to his friends. He sits there in the warm afternoon sunshine drinking in the peace of the place, with the outgoing tide gently rocking the decoys; seagulls and diving fish hawks piercing the silence with their shrill cries; slim, dark frigate birds wheeling endlessly in lazy, effortless circles high in the clear, azure sky above us. Mangrove leaves stiffened by the salt air clapping against each other in the light breeze. Then suddenly Charlie would murmur, almost whisper, "Mark," as black specks would appear in the distant sky to the north, as the large black and white feathered brant would begin their long and sure descent to the decoys. My best memory is of Charles sitting there among his friends at peace with himself and the world, so enjoying the scene that he often did not bother to take up his gun as the geese arrived above the decoys. At this precise moment, there is anticipation in the air, and peace, and hope. It may seem

farfetched to you but, to me, much of this is akin to the mood of man and woman in the face of the Christian message of eternity and immortality towards which willy-nilly we are all heading, with whatever baggage of good or evil we carry along with us as we move through time to eternity. We must anticipate something for none of us wishes life to end suddenly, abruptly and forever, as it does for a brant.

Peace is part of every concept of eternity because our lives and time are so frantic, frenetic and unpeaceful. Hope leads us to look ahead with confidence in God's wonderful saving grace that, if we are doing our best to follow the law of love and generosity and friendship freely given, somehow this will perdure eternally, and we with it. If good does not perdure, life is a nightmare and this world a madhouse.

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I would like to believe that there was much more good than evil in the life of Charles Stone Jones, and, if from a distance I have shared my daily masses with him during the final days of his life, I would hope that from eternity he still shares with me that good spirit of kindness and generosity that pervaded his life. At this point, I can sense Charlie leaning over my shoulder and saying, "Padre, haven't you said just about enough, if not too much." He's probably right and yet there is another word that I must say, this time not about him, but for him. He would certainly want me to thank you, his good friends, for your goodness in being here today as a tribute to his memory and his friendship and I assure you that he will be touched as we all tell Genny, his good wife, and all his family of our deep sorrow at his passing and our condolences to all of them on their loss of a good husband, father, grandfather, and brother. And our condolences to each other on our loss of the best of friends. May I conclude by requesting that all you join me in a few moments of silent prayer, each of us in his or her own way asking the good Lord to grant this good man the blessings of eternity. May Charles Stone Jones rest in peace eternal.