(Address given by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Opening of the School Year, Universite Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, September 18, 1978)

A NEW VISION FOR THE YEAR 2000

I wish to speak to you today about that poorest part of the world which is now called the Fourth World. It comprises about a billion people -- a fourth of humanity -- who live in about forty countries, mainly in the Southern Hemisphere of our globe. We, in our universities, must be concerned about these inhabitants of the Fourth World because they belong to our common humanity. Even though their actual afflictions prevent them from being as fully human as we are, we should in our freedom and development be a source of hope for them. ℓ 1-2

What may one say about these poorest of the poor? They are largely illiterate, that is, totally cut off from the wonderful treasures of culture, literature, science, technology, and art that have characterized our universities and beautified and humanized our world over the centuries of human development. Every book is to these billion people a closed book. The knowledge and science that are the glory of our universities is for each of them an unknown world, a lost heritage. That which brightens our minds and enlarges our hearts is, in their case, total blindness. How can three billion of the earth's inhabitants, especially those of us who live and work in universities, glory in the dawn and the high noon of human culture when one billion of our fellow human beings languish in lifelong darkness?

But there are even more basic disabilities afflicting these brethren of ours to the South. They are not only spiritually, but physically hungry most of the time. Half a billion of them are actually malnourished. More than ten million of them, mostly children, will die unnecessarily this year. Their debilitated condition makes them very vulnerable to every possible illness.

The actual diseases these billion people face daily are generally unknown to us. Cancer and heart disease are the main killers in the North, but they face the tropical diseases of tracoma, filariasis, schistosomiasis, and a newly virulent form of malaria. Each of these tropical diseases afflicts hundreds of millions of people.

Most of the Fourth World inhabitants live in miserable habitations and most are poorly clothed. They have an income of less than two hundred dollars a year for all of their needs; food, shelter, clothing, health, and education.

Need their situation be this hopeless? Not really, if we of the developed world, especially those of us in universities, really cared enough to help them help themselves. The actual price for doing this would not be more than twice the fifteen billion dollars presently being spent for human development around the world. The total amount needed would be less than a tenth of last year's world expenditures for armaments, some 350 billions.

Never before in the history of mankind could we have even dreamed of creating a much better world for so many people: modern

science and technology have given us a new key to the future. Unfortunately, we have more readily used this new knowledge and power for destructive or trivial purposes.

Two decades ago, President Kennedy announced that in a decade we would put men on the moon and return them safely to earth. I believe that the most spectacular result of this successful endeavor was not the close up view of the moon, but the startling view of the earth from afar. For the first time in the history of mankind, we humans saw what our earth looks like from the moon, a beautiful satellite, blue, brown, and flecked with white clouds, spinning in the black void of space.

One must say that spaceship earth looks much more beautiful from afar than it does from up close, particularly if one considers the Fourth World of human suffering and squalor.

It is admittedly difficult to visualize the human condition as it is reflected in the different conditions of life for four billion human inhabitants of earth. Possibly we can now simplify the situation if we reduce the crew members of spaceship earth to five persons. The person who represents most of us -- mainly Western and Northern, mostly white and Christian, mostly developed and affluent -- this privileged person has the use of about 80% of the finite life resources of spaceship earth -- education, food, health services, shelter, energy, affluence.

The other four crew members, representing the rest of humanity, have to survive with the 20% of the earthly life resources that are left for them, and even these few remaining resources are not evenly distributed.

If there is to be more lasting peace among the crew members of spaceship earth, the first and greatest prerequisite at this historical moment is justice, a more equitable sharing and use of the total life resources available.

I would suggest that the world is ready today for a new and exciting challenge: to create within the two decades remaining before the advent of the new millennium a new kind of world with a new kind of hope, a world without a billion illiterates and hungry, homeless sick people who live brief and brutal lives compared to ours. This would be a greater and more meaningful challenge than a trip to the moon and back. It is admittedly more difficult, too, since it would require a political decision, not of one nation, but of all the developed nations of the world. It would require a reordering of priorities, not just in economic terms of gross national product, but in terms of human growth for everyone on earth. The most significant fact is that this challenge, for the first time in human history, is possible. We can eradicate ignorance, hunger, unnecessary illness, squalor, and human hopelessness if we put our newly available scientific and technical means to work in a new and challenging context.

What are these new resources? Since the beginning of the post-war era, we have developed computers, miniaturized storage and

instantaneous retrieval of knowledge, colored television, airborne atomic power, synchronous satellites, three of which can simultaneously transmit to all the world on millions of circuits, ground receiving stations, and xerography for reproduction of transmitted materials. Imagine what this can mean for the education of illiterates who cannot hope to have normal access to teachers, classrooms, books, not just to learn how to read and write, but to learn better methods of agriculture, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation, child care, obtaining cleaner water, and all the rest. It is not that we lack these kinds of new knowledge, but that we have not joined all of these new technologies to enable the few best teachers on earth to bring these new kinds of knowledge to those needing it most, despite their present unnecessary inaccessibility in many remote and isolated parts of this globe. The modern miracles of communication have rather been used to transmit vulgarity, triviality, and violence. They might better be used to enable great master teachers to transmit hope and access to a better life.

We have in recent years created a worldwide network of agricultural research stations in Mexico, Colombia, and Peru, in Nigeria, Kenya, India, and the Philippines, specializing in tropical agriculture and better genetic varieties of rice, wheat, corn, millet, and sorghum, new kinds of manioc and legumes, new disease resistent food crops, and new technologies for the small farmer who can best grow the needed food where the hungry people exist. Again, the

solution of the problem depends on the transmission of this new knowledge, the accessibilities of water, roads, markets, fertilizer, insecticides, and the financial credit to make all these possible at once. None of these problems are insurmountable. The answers are at hand. But we need the political will to mount the necessary effort with as much determination and zeal as we use to pile up mountains of armaments and luxuries. In a word, we must begin to care, to reorder the use of our new magnificent capabilities. And the great universities of the world must lead the way.

In the developed world, we spend millions each year to research the few illnesses that most afflict us. But we almost entirely neglect medical research on the other tropical diseases that presently infect hundreds of millions of our brethren to the South. We managed to eradicate smallpox, yellow fever, and cholera when we put our minds to the task, for example, while building the Panama Canal in the tropics. We could do the same today for schistosomiasis, filariasis, tracoma, and chagas, if we determined to do so. RF

We have known for a decade how to treat the killing dehydration that results from cholera and infectious diarrhea, by a simple omnipresent remedy of sugar and salt and water given orally, but people go on dying because medical education and health delivery have not kept pace with our laboratory progress. We are too busy selling perfume and lingerie, cigarettes and coca cola.

Everyone knows that there is a very limited supply of oil and gas available for the future. Neither is there an inexhaustible

amount of coal. Yet we use all three of these non-renewable sources of energy in ever increasing amounts while neglecting the ever-renewing energy from the sun, the wind, and the waves. The Fourth World would be immeasurably assisted in its development if our research made possible for them a free and unfailing source of energy. We would even profit from these new energies ourselves.

Last Summer, for the third time, I traveled around the world stopping in large and small countries, mostly in the tropics. I was struck by the great variety of cultures, religions, races, and the persistent hope of mankind everywhere for a better life in the years ahead, despite the obvious obstacles, past and present. One cannot escape the conclusion that the differences of mankind have too often in the past been a cause for dissension rather than human enrichment. Almost everywhere one finds the glories of the past confronting the ambiguities of the present, as Polannaruwa and a Sigiriya in Sri Lanka, a Borobudur and a Prambanan in Indonesia. And one is led to dream of the future. Despite these lofty dreams, almost everywhere in the present world one finds majorities imposing upon minorities, the powerful abusing the weak, the affluent unmindful of the poor.

Somehow this,too, must change if we are to create a better and more peaceful world by the advent of the next millennium. If the human condition is to improve, human beings everywhere must make common cause in using the greatest resources that God has given us, our intelligence and our freedom, and His grace, too, to transcend

the human pettiness and selfishness, the national pride and religious prejudice, the cultural imperialism and color consciousness that have caused our beautiful spaceship earth to be so humanly unbeautiful and unjust and unpeaceful today. A new millennium is possible.

Everything we learn and know and teach in our universities today would point in the direction of a better world. There is only the agony of human perversion that somehow resists the better urgings of our spirit. We might well ask with St. Paul, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" I trust that we will be ready to accept the same answer that St. Paul received, "The grace of God through Our Lord, Jesus Christ."

It is because of this larger answer, beyond science and technology and human perversion, that we begin yet another academic year at this great Catholic University of Louvain. May our faculty and students share ever more, and contribute ever more, to the realization of man's higher hopes for a better tomorrow, a new millennium awaiting creation.