

How does one exit quickly and gracefully after thirty-five years on center stage? Certainly, not easily.

One could do a lot of reminiscing about the past, but then, one can take only so much of that past history. Tooting our own horns does not become Father Ned or myself. These recent weeks and months have been like attending one's own funeral. If Father Ned and I were to die in the next few months, I think you could well dispense with the funeral, or at least, the funeral eulogy, as redundant. Not that it hasn't been pleasant. I've been constantly reminded of that wonderful phrase of

2 Adlai Stevenson: that it's all right to hear so many nice things about yourself as long as you don't inhale them. Better to ask God to forgive all those who exaggerated and to forgive us for half-believing the wonderful exaggerations, the idealizing of what was, for us, often prosaic, or first doing what needed doing. *just*

Even so, they have been wonderful years for both of us. It was not a script that either of us would have written for our lives. But what more could one hope for or want than to spend so many years in this

3 wonderful place, with so many wonderful people.

How does one describe, for those who haven't spent years here, how special this place is? I remember during the Marian Year of 1954, my second as President, visiting shrines of Our Lady: Our Lady of Knock in Ireland, Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe in Mexico City. When I returned here and was praying at the Grotto, it suddenly occurred to me that Notre Dame is an even greater Shrine of Our Lady. She visited those other places. She lives here. And here through the almost century and a half of our history, and the other century and a half before Sorin arrived, She

4

has worked here. Her slow but lasting miracles in the lives of thousands of young men and now women: miracles of faith and prayer, miracles of vision and knowledge, miracles of heroic lives and of lifelong inspiration, miracles of good conquering evil, light dispelling darkness, virtue victorious over vice.

Some of the miracles were months or even years in being worked, others were flashes like lightning in a Summer sky. To have been privy to many of these spiritual and educational miracles, to have

5 heard about them through alumni encounters and letters, to have prayed in the shadows of the Grotto while miracles were happening in the flickering light of candles, all that is a privilege beyond counting, certainly beyond deserving. But that is precisely the most precious memory that survives the years. How to thank so many valiant colleagues, lay and clerical, over so many years of upward struggle? How to thank all who made this place grow even more splendid, to become a brighter light in what was often encircling darkness? How to share widely so many incomparable blessings, so many quiet miracles?

Our beloved University Chaplain. Father Rob

6 Griffin, put some words in my mouth in a recent Observer article. I happily accept these words which he has me speaking to a colleague.

"We're here for the sake of others. Some of them are in hot water or have made mistakes. A few are afraid we are not to be trusted. All of them are wonderful, even when they are unhappy or bitter; they're worth any amount of

7  
trouble, so what difference does it make if they cost us a night's sleep and hours of persuasion? Notre Dame is here as a moral miracle, showing us what decency and sacrifice are all about; we're here temporarily as caretakers of this mythical campus. Let's show the world all the class we've learned from the traditions that were handed down to us. Even if the ones, for whose sake we're knocking ourselves out, are angry with us, let's make them see we're

8

here for them, if ever they need us."

The magic moment is now, the medium is television, and there must be a sharing among thousands of alumni and students who savor these few moments of passing wonder and mystery.

We are all Notre Dame men and women. We have all had our lives touched and graced by this special place. Together, tonight, our main word, looking backwards, is one of thanksgiving for graces unmerited and blessings without number.



9

But one must also look ahead at moments like this. What is past is prelude for what is yet to come. And what is yet to come?

If we are faithful to our Catholic heritage and our dedication to Our Lady in this place, the future may well make the past look dull and uneventful. All great universities are by their very natures, splendid places, where truth reigns supreme, truth which is another name for God, the Transcendent, the Immense, the Holy, One truly the Awesome, as students say today.

Add to that natural truth, common to all universities, the basic truth of faith, truth beyond knowing spoken to us by the Holy Spirit through the

10

prophets and the evangelists, truth treasured above all else by the Church, truth incarnate in Jesus Christ, Our Lord, then one truly adds to the splendor of this place. Now we speak of eternal meanings and divine realities added to the natural treasure of the university. Now we envision grace elevating nature to the divine, eternity transcending time, substance substituted for shadow.

All this is the true and ever-expanding glory of the Catholic university that is faithful to its

// heritage as the first kind of Western universities, in Paris of 1204, and still representing today, the oldest intellectual and moral traditions of the West. It is a heritage that is easily enough bartered for passing glitter and ephemeral glory. For us, in this place, the task today and tomorrow is not just to be passively faithful to our heritage and repetitive of its content, but to deepen, to intensify, to broaden our human understanding of the treasure of faith. This is the true task of theology at the heart of the Catholic University, but philosophy too, in its own way, may help as well, and does help here.

But again, one does not stop here with philosophy

12 and theology. Truth is truth, reflective of God's reality, wherever it is found, by whatever means. And there are many facets of truth that enrich human knowledge by further scholarship in the humanities, the physical, biological, and social sciences, by art and music and law, by technology broadly conceived, and overarching all, by the wisdom that sees all in the broadest perspective of time and eternity. In this total and integral vision of truth, all members of a Catholic university family are enriched, faculty and students, alumni and

13 alumnae, too. We grow together, and together we walk confidently with faith, hope, and love towards the ultimate beauty of God and joy of eternal life with Him.

To have been President of such a company of valiant searching souls, to have walked at the head of this thirty-five year long procession, to have shared with you the peace, the mystery, the optimism, the joie de vivre, the ongoing challenge, the ever-youthful ebullient vitality, and, most of all, the deep and abiding caring that characterizes this special place and all of its people, young and old, this is a blessing that I hope to carry with me into eternity, when that time comes.

14

For now, I can only urge one and all to join me in trying to be ever faithful to all we have learned here: how to enjoy blessings and how to bear sorrow, how to live and how to grow in love, how to serve and preserve all that we have faith in, hope for, and love. In a word, how to find the will of God in our lives and to accept that divine will for our good.

I hope that these thirty-five years have meant mostly that, to you and to me, and if so, I can ask for no more than to be deeply grateful to God, to His

Blessed Mother, and to all of you.

As to songs yet to be sung, the mountains yet to be climbed, I leave that, too, in the hands of God. As to the University, I leave this University, as Sorin did on that first snowy, frozen November founding day in 1842, in the hands of Notre Dame, Our Lady.

And finally, since universities do have presidents, and this University a brand new one, I borrow some words from one of my predecessors, Father Charles O'Donnell, to leave with my successor, Father Ed, Monk Malloy. O'Donnell entitled his poem: AT NOTRE DAME.

So well I love these woods I half believe  
There is an intimate fellowship we share;  
So many years we breathed the same brave air,  
Kept spring in common, and were one to grieve  
Summer's undoing, saw the fall bereave  
Us both of beauty, together learned to bear  
The weight of winter:—when I go elsewhere—  
An unreturning journey — I would leave  
Some whisper of a song in these old oaks,  
A footfall lingering till some distant Summer  
Another singer down these paths may stray —  
The destined one a gold future cloaks —



17

And ~~he~~ may love them, too, this graced  
newcomer

And may remember that I passed this way.