

A NEW VISION FOR SPACESHIP EARTH

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Commencement Address
By Rev. Theodore M.
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The following is an address given by Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame, at the Alumni Exercises, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., on June 13, 1973. Father Hesburgh also received an honorary degree from Harvard.

It is a strange paradox that the most striking photograph brought back from the moon by the astronauts was not a close-up picture of the moon itself, but a faraway picture of the earth. There it shines as no earth dweller had ever seen it before: blue, green, flecked with white cloud patterns, a beautiful small globe set against the blackness of space's void through which it is whirling at incredible speed.

Harvard's own Archibald McLeish caught the poetry of the vision. It is up to all of us to make the new vision come true. The sad reality is that the earth is much more beautiful from afar than it is up close. Not that physical beauty does not exist on earth. I have been awed by the majesty of the soaring snowy, windswept heights of the Himalayas seen against the jade green uplands of Nepal. The pastel-colored sweep of the Britannica Range in Antarctica seen from McMurdo base camp almost two hundred miles away is enough to thrill the soul of any observer. A sunset following a storm at sea, a sunrise on the hushed African game-filled caldera of Ngorongoro Crater, the Cordillera Blanca of Peru and Chile viewed from a high-flying jet on a bright

winter afternoon, these are unforgettably beautiful earthly visions. Note, however, that in most of them, man, apart from the viewer, is almost completely absent, and where man is present in large numbers on earth, one can almost always expect a diminution of beauty, both physical beauty diminished through pollution and spiritual beauty marred by violence and injustice.

It is a singular blessing for our age that we have been able to see the earth from the moon, to see it as it really is, in Barbara Ward's words: Spaceship Earth, a beautiful, small space vehicle, providing a viable ecosystem for human beings with quite limited resources. As Heilbroner has said so well: "Life on this planet is a fragile affair, the kind of miraculous microbial activity that flourished on the thin film of air and water and decomposed rock which separates the uninhabitable core of the earth from the void of space."

We, the passengers of spaceship earth, have the capability of creating by our intelligence and freedom a whole series of man-made systems that will enhance the inherent beauty of our planet, and make it even more humanly viable and physically beautiful, or we can turn spaceship earth into an ugly wasteland where human beings barely survive and hardly live in any human sense.

If you have any doubt that we are doing the latter rather than the former, walk through the streets of Calcutta, visit the *favellas*, *barriadas*, *villas miserias*, and *callampas* surrounding the Latin American capital cities, step aboard the floating junks adjacent to Hong Kong's harbor, or look at the native locations north of Johannesburg in South Africa, or inspect some of our own inner-city slums or Chicano *colonias* in the Southwest, or miners' rotting villages in Appalachia, or almost any American Indian reservation in the West. It isn't just what you see that will sicken you. It is that it is all so unnecessary, that it is man-made, and man-kept, and that it is in startling contrast to the

way other humans are living in luxury only a few miles away from each of these human sewers and garbage heaps.

An easy answer would be to say that there is just not enough of the world's resources to house and feed everyone — but then remember that last year, and for most of the years that we can remember, the governments of this planet have spent about \$200 billion on armaments, and that is more than the total annual income of the poorest half of the earth's population. We do it because the Russians do it, and they do it because we do it, and so the foolishness goes on, and on, and on, all around the world. Meanwhile, the poor go to bed hungry, if they have a bed.

To put the case for the poor most simply, imagine our spaceship earth with only five people aboard instead of more than three billion. Imagine that one of those five crew members represents those of us earth passengers who live in the Western world of North America and Europe, one-fifth of humanity on earth, mainly white and Christian. The person representing us has the use and control of 80 per cent of the total life-sustaining resources available aboard our spacecraft. The other four crewmen, representing the other four-fifths of humanity — better than 2½ billion people — have to get along on the 20 per cent of the resources that are left, leaving them each about 5 per cent to our man's 80 per cent. To make it worse, our man is in the process of increasing his use of these limited resources to 90 per cent.

Now if this sounds piggish to you, it is! If you put resources just in terms of energy, we in the United States, with 6 per cent of the world's population, used last year about 40 per cent of the total world's available energy. While we complained about a trade deficit, we made two billion dollars excess from the less developed countries, depending on our less favored brethren in Latin America to provide us with one billion of these dollars in surplus trade balances, while we provided them with the least aid ever, since aid began.

How much human peace can you visualize or expect aboard our spacecraft when its limited resources are so unjustly shared, especially when the situation is worsening each year? Peace is not gained by armaments, but by justice. If four-fifths of the world's people live in misery while the other fifth in the United States and Europe enjoy ever greater luxury, then we can expect no peace aboard spaceship earth, only frustration, despair, and, ultimately, violence.

The tragedy is that this is the world that man has made and is making. The general human condition is very bad indeed aboard our spacecraft.

Is there any hope for man? Is our spacecraft really hurtling towards massive human disaster, cataclysmic human upheaval and ultimately the reduction of this beautiful globe to a burned-out cinder in space? One can be optimistic, I believe, only if this generation — and I address the young particularly — can shuck off the madness of the nightmare that man for centuries, and increasingly of late, has been creating aboard our planet. A new global vision is needed if man is to create on earth the beauty that this planet manifests and seems to promise from afar. The vision must be one of social justice, of the interdependence of all mankind on this small spacecraft. Unless the equality, and the oneness, and the common dignity of mankind pervade the vision — the only future of this planet is violence and destruction on an ever-increasing scale, a crescendo of man's inhumanity to man that can only result globally in the extermination of mankind by man.

As one of our graduates in the Peace Corps in Malawi, Africa, put it: "While our leaders have their power battles and ego trips, countless millions of unknowns are in need of a bit more food, a year or two more of education, another pot or pan, a sensible way of controlling family size, a book or a bicycle. These people aren't asking for much; they would only like to be a bit more free to be a bit more human."

I believe that none but the young — or the young in heart — can dream this vision or pursue this ideal. Why? Because it means leaving behind the conventional wisdom that pervades the old and aging bones of the Western World. The vision of one peaceful community of mankind on earth, dedicated to justice, equity and human dignity for all is contrary to most of the modern American myths — unlimited growth for us at the expense of almost everyone else; the absoluteness of our Declaration of Independence; patriotism isolated from every other moral value, my country right or wrong; security only by force of arms, however unjustly used; material wealth as the greatest goal of all, since it guarantees pleasure, power, and status — everything but compassionate, unselfish rectitude.

Who but the young or young in heart can say, I will march to another drumbeat; I will seek another vision for my country and my world? Not a vision of might makes right, but noblesse oblige. Not a vision of power, but of honor. Not just honor proclaimed as we hear it proclaimed so loosely today, but honor lived. As Robert Frost said:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

What is mainly needed today to make the difference is a vision of justice to which we commit ourselves anew at home, to demonstrate that if justice is possible here in America, between different races, different religions, different socioeconomic classes, it might just be possible all around the world. America's leadership must be demonstrated at home while it is proclaimed abroad, and lastly, our leadership must be inspired by the same kind of vision that first inspired the birth of this country, a vision of human equality and dignity

needed today to create the rebirth of one whole world, a new planet where human beings aspire to be humane, where beautiful human beings begin to replace the past creations of human ugliness with new creations born of compassion, concern and competence, too.

Is all this an empty dream, a naive vision? Not if young people take it seriously, joining intelligence to their idealism, competence to their vision, and the courage to dare to be different in how they view the world they are going to make, or better, remake. I am often asked, "How can we possibly turn the world over to them?" My answer is both simple and obvious. "What other choice do you have? Tomorrow is theirs, not ours."

We might all begin by a declaration of the interdependence of mankind today. The evidence is totally on the side of such a declaration — even as regards this country which was founded almost two centuries ago by a Declaration of Independence. There is no serious problem facing our country, and indeed the world today, that is not global in its sweep, as well as in its solution. You can make a whole list: pollution, the dollar, population, trade, peace, human rights, human development, security, health, education, communication, drugs, crime, energy, space, raw materials, food, freedom, and so forth. Try solving any one of these problems in any adequate way without involving the whole world. Try even thinking about the philosophical implications of a true solution without reference to the inherent unity, equality, fraternity and dignity of mankind, and what that dignity demands and requires of human persons everywhere, but more especially those who live where the power, the wealth and the leverage lie.

I was brought up in an America visualized as completely separated from the rest of the world, proud of its independence and oceanic-insured isolation. Now we learn that the energy that makes all of America run, or be lighted, heated, mechanized and mobile, will

depend mainly on sources outside the United States in another dozen years, and that the 14 basic metal resources we need for our manufacturing and industrial process will come mainly from other less developed countries by the turn of the century. The almighty dollar my contemporaries idolized has been devalued twice in less than two years.

Containing Communism has been for almost three decades the one all-embracing reason for doing almost anything abroad — from the Marshall Plan announced on this platform to save Europe, to destroying Vietnam in order to save it. What validity does containing Communism have now when our greatest diplomatic concerns today are better relations with the two worldwide root sources of Communism, Russia and China? If we can recognize self-interested and new interdependence in this new relationship with China and Russia, as indeed we must, then we can recognize it anywhere and everywhere. As our students love to sing during liturgical celebrations at Notre Dame, "There's a new world coming, every day, every day." Indeed there is!

It would appear quite obvious at this point that the winds of unity are blowing, that many are working to bridge the many chasms that have separated mankind aboard spacecraft earth. Diplomacy is happily bridging the chasm of ideology. All mankind need no longer visualize society exactly as we do. Ecumenism is bringing the Christian and non-Christian religions together in understanding at last, thank God. Cultural exchange is finding new and mutual values in the East and the West, while mercantilism in the modern dress of the multinational corporation is pioneering some unusual ways of economic development between the Northern and Southern parts of our spacecraft. The energy crisis is pushing for a solution to the Middle Eastern dilemma. Racial prejudice stands convicted worldwide of idiocy when Africans in Uganda

expel Asians who were born there and have adopted that country long ago, or when the citizens of Bangladesh cannot forgive their fellow Bihari. Male chauvinism is on the way out in the Western World, belatedly since in the East and Middle East, India and Israel already have female Prime Ministers. The unity of mankind must be the wave of the future if we are not to divide ourselves unnecessarily according to race, religion, color, sex and age, and thereby make human life impossibly complicated aboard our shrinking spacecraft.

This leaves the one great remaining divider of humankind, perhaps the worst of all, national sovereignty. Suppose that an intelligent and cultured visitor from another solar system were to be informed, on seeing our planet earth as the astronauts saw it from the moon, that in addition to all the inequities, injustices and alienations already mentioned, mankind on earth insisted on governing our spaceship by dividing it into 150 different nationalities, some very large, some impossibly small, and quite a few in between. Our interplanetary visitor would also learn that there was no reasonable rationale for these national divisions, that they often represented people of the same language, religion, race, and culture, and were, in fact, often separated only by historical accidents. Now that the political separation is a fact, they are ready to fight to the death to maintain their national identities and territorial prerogatives.

Since this is a factual description of how things mainly are on spaceship earth, how difficult it will be to achieve human unity, decency and oneness of purpose aboard our spaceship. We must find some new way of transcending this inane block of nationality that pits human against human because by an accident of birth they happen to be American or Canadian, East or West German, Venezuelan or Colombian, Kenyan or Ugandan, North or South Vietnamese.

I would like to propose a solution that would bypass, rather than cut the Gordian knot of nationality. It is likewise a solution

which is bound to be misunderstood unless someone stands in spirit on the moon and views the world from there, with all its promise of beauty, unity and a common home for mankind united. As McLeish said: "To see the earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold — brothers who know now they are truly brothers."

What I would suggest is that everyone in the world would be allowed to hold dual citizenship — to be a citizen of the nation in which he or she happens to be born and, in addition, to be able to qualify for world citizenship.

The application to be a citizen of the world, of spaceship earth, would involve certain commitments:

1. One would have to certify his or her belief in the unity of mankind, in the equal dignity of every human being, whatever his or her nationality, race, religion, sex or color.

2. One would have to certify his or her willingness to work for world peace through the promotion and practice of justice at home and abroad.

3. One would have to do something to prove the sincerity of these beliefs, something to promote justice for all, something to promote the peace and well-being of his or her fellow humans at home and abroad.

The growing number of human beings on spaceship earth who would freely opt for world, in addition to national, citizenship might begin to prove that men and women are ready to regard each other truly as brothers and sisters, to seek justice for all, to live in peace, to commit one's idealism to practice, to transcend nationalistic chauvinism, and to seek to realize a new vision of a spaceship earth with liberty and justice for all — the only true road to world peace.

One would hope that whatever international agency would certify this additional world citizenship might also grant to its world

citizens some benefits befitting their commitment, such as free passage without visas anywhere in the world, a small concession, but one symbolic of what one free world might be for all its citizens as more of them apply for world passports.

One would like to hope that our country, with its rich transnational, multiracial and polyreligious population base, might be the first to propose and allow this new idea of dual citizenship for all who would desire to give leadership and meaning to this new concept of a more beautiful, more human spaceship earth.

I would like to say for myself, and I would hope for many of you, that I would welcome this kind of opportunity to declare myself interested in the welfare of mankind everywhere in the world, concerned for the justice due all who suffer injustice anywhere in the world. I would like to believe that being a citizen of the world would enlarge me as a person, would declare my fraternity with every other man, woman and child in the world. I would take world citizenship to be a firm commitment to work for a new vision of spaceship earth and all its passengers, to be a harbinger of hope for all who are close to despair because of their dismal human condition, finally, to be a beacon of light for humanity beleaguered by darkness in so many parts of our world today.

Again, one of Notre Dame's Peace Corps volunteers, now studying at Harvard, puts it well: "One comes away from an experience like the Peace Corps with a sense of real international brotherhood. The fact that a fellow who had never been out of the Midwest and could speak only English could then live in two countries on the south and eastern fringes of Asia, form deep and lasting friendships with the native people, learn a language and a culture in both Ceylon and Korea and function well in them — it makes one feel a sense of oneness with people all over the world."

I do not see the possibility of world citizenship as a panacea or an immediate answer to all the world's ills and evils. Rather, it would be for each of us a chance to declare our interdependence with one another, our common humanity, our shared hopes for our spaceship earth, our brotherhood as members of the crew, our common vision of the task facing humanity — to achieve human dignity and the good life together.

Once more, Barbara Ward has elucidated the new vision best:

One of the fundamental moral insights of the Western culture which has now swept over the whole globe is that, against all historical evidence, mankind is not a group of warring tribes, but a single, equal and fraternal community. Hitherto, distances have held men apart. Scarcity has driven them to competition and enmity. It has required great vision, great holiness, great wisdom to keep alive and vivid the sense of the unity of man. It is precisely the saints, the poets, the philosophers, and the great men of science who have borne witness to the underlying unity which daily life has denied. But now the distances are abolished. It is at least possible that our new technological resources, properly deployed, will conquer ancient shortage. Can we not at such a time realize the moral unity of our human experience and make it the basis of a patriotism for the world itself?

It will be easy to scoff at this vision of our humanity, our oneness, our common task as fellow passengers on a small planet. The great and powerful of this earth, and indeed of our country and Europe, can easily sniff cynically and return to their game of power politics, national jealousies, mountains of armaments, millions of graves of men mourned by widows and orphans, ravaged oceans, and unverdant plains and hungry homeless people who despair of the good life. Somehow I believe that there is enough good will in our country and in the world to expect millions of people to

declare all of this powerful posturing of corrupt politicians to be arrant nonsense on a common spaceship, to say that we do want all men and women to be brothers and sisters, that we do believe in justice and peace, and that we think homes, and swaying fields of grain, and schools and medicine are better than billions spent for guns, tanks, submarines and ABM's. The trouble is that the millions of little people, the ones who really man spaceship earth, the ones who really work, and suffer, and die while the politicians posture and play, these little ones have never been given a chance to declare themselves. And this is wrong, globally wrong.

It is, I believe, a most important, urgent, and timely part of the new world a-borning that everyone in the world should be able to declare his or her broader citizenship in adopting a wider vision for spaceship earth, a vision that transcends nationality and anything else that separates man from man. Having traveled across the face of our beautiful planet, having traversed all its oceans and its continents, having shared deep human hopes with my human brothers and sisters of every nationality, religion, color, and race, having broken bread and found loving friendship and brotherhood everywhere on earth, I am prepared this day to declare myself a citizen of the world, and to invite all of you, and everyone everywhere to embrace this broader vision of our interdependent world, our common humanity, our noblest hopes and our common quest for justice in our times and, ultimately, for peace on earth. Lest I sound too Utopian, or even too secularistic, since I am first and foremost a priest, may I also now pray that the good Lord Jesus who lived and died for us may also bless these living efforts of ours to be truly followers of Him who blessed both the peacemakers and all who hunger for justice.

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Dear Father Ted:

Recently I received a copy of your address at Harvard and read it with great interest and profit. Your major points are powerfully made and win my hearty agreement. All the more, then, do I want to make some comments on one of them.

National sovereignty remains a great divider of mankind. Since this problem has intrigued me for a long time, my observations will concern the impact of national sovereignty on international bodies.

One of the characteristics of the post-Second World War era has been the proliferation of regional and functional organizations. The reason has been partly objective necessity, such as the interdependence of nations in this shrinking world, partly illusion. Political leaders often live in an atmosphere of wishful thinking, disposed to believe - or at least pretend - that creation of a new international agency leads toward the solution of some problems. Novel international institutions usually generate optimism, but they are not substitutes for agreement among nations, and might even camouflage conflicting policies for a time, in reality only transferring unsolved problems and disagreements to different spheres. Irrespective of the origin and nature of international organizations, a major stumbling block in their activities is the underlying national state system. With a few exceptions, in all international bodies, each member state has one vote. Whether the population is around 100,000 or 200,000 (Maldiv Island, Iceland, etc.) or over 200 million (U.S.A., U.S.S.R., India, China) doesn't make any difference from the point of view of "sovereign equality" of states.

Theoretically, any person can serve mankind through his national state but in reality this is not a simple task in many countries. Moreover, the fiction of sovereign equality of states distorts the real power political and economic situation. Consequently, the United Nations and other international organizations reflect less and less the contemporary political realities.

The no-question-asked admission of mini-states to the United Nations has created an absurd situation which will paralyze more and more the

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activities of the world organization. I discussed briefly some of the problems involved in the enclosed short paper which I prepared this year for a panel session of the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association.

Last year a graduate student, Steven Kocharhook, completed a dissertation under my direction on "A Legal Regime for the Ocean Floor Beyond National Jurisdiction". One of his major arguments was based on a United Nations resolution which declared the seabed (this covers approximately 70 percent of the globe) "the heritage of mankind". This means that the seabed is "res communis", not "res nullius". If this concept were truly accepted, an international agency could take over the management of the seabed and about two-thirds of the globe would not be under national sovereignty. Yet agreement in principle more often than not means disagreement in practice. I have ~~some~~ doubts about the chances of practical realization of "the heritage of mankind" idea in view of the structure of the contemporary society of states. Ideological conflicts and a north-south division of states further complicates the situation.

Another related question is the national allegiance of international officials. Although international agencies are supposed to appoint the most qualified person to each post, in reality many agencies are obliged to hire staff members on the basis of a national quota system. This is the reason why numerous international civil servants are incompetent and continue to serve the interests of their country (See pp. 3-4 of my paper). Your proposal concerning a dual citizenship might greatly alleviate these conditions.

Despite the sordid mess which momentarily overshadows our institutions, I am convinced that Americans are more inclined to take a universalist attitude than citizens of any other country. Therefore, I still hope that this muddled period of history will not be followed by another variation of introvert neoisolationism or jingo-nationalism but many Americans will continue to act as de facto citizens of the world. I am confident that your address has contributed to the development of a genuine internationalist intellectual climate.

Sincerely yours,



Stephen D. Kertesz

SDK:rsm

Enclosure