

# EDUCATION

for  
**RESPONSIBLE  
LEADERSHIP**



An address by the  
**REV. THEODORE M. HESBURGH, C.S.C.**  
President of  
**The University of Notre Dame**

**O**NE OF THE GREATEST thrills that comes to a new president of Notre Dame is the opportunity to present the story of the University to many people across the length and breadth of America. I can be frank with you in admitting that I feel honored, indeed, to have the opportunity and, yet, very inadequate to the task.

Speaking about Notre Dame is, for one who has lived and worked here, much like speaking about one's own mother. No matter what words are chosen, or what theme developed, there is always a sense of failure in attempting to present the reality of a person so loved and cherished. A university is much like a person also in this: it is born, it grows at a certain historical time and place, it meets problems that spell success or failure. If it meets the serious problems adequately, it grows. If not, it dies and is forgotten.

The University of Notre Dame had a dramatic birth and growth that, in large measure, paralleled the birth and growth of our own America. Two great personalities summarize in their lives the early history of the University.

The first of these was Stephen Theodore Badin. He was studying for the priesthood in France at the time of the French Revolution. He saw no future there but the guillotine, so he fled to America and completed his studies for the priesthood in Baltimore. This turn of events gave him the distinction of being the first Catholic priest ordained in the United States, by its first Catholic Bishop, John Carroll, whose cousin, Charles Carroll of Carrolton, signed the Declaration of Independence.

#### **The Dream of a University**

After ordination, Father Badin headed West and became a missionary in what had

been the Northwest Territory. He traveled thousands of miles on horseback throughout the States of Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. In the year 1830, something providential happened. Father Badin, then sixty years old, happened to be in Detroit when an old Indian Chief, named Pokagon, came seeking a priest for his Potawatomi Indians some two hundred miles away in Northern Indiana. Once more, Father Badin wearily climbed on his horse and headed West. Two years later, as the sands of his active life were running out, he made an investment in the future of this great Midwestern heartland of America, that had been the scene of his life's labors. He bought several hundred acres of land around his missionary cabin and deeded it to the nearest Bishop in Vincennes, Indiana, to be given in turn to anyone who would share his vision of building there a school for young Americans.

For ten years, it looked as though the vision would be forgotten. But in 1841, a young French priest, Father Edward Sorin, one of the first members of the newly-formed Congregation of Holy Cross, was sent to America to help the Bishop of Vincennes. We are told that he kissed the soil of America when he stepped ashore in New York after about six weeks at sea. We find it hard to imagine today how it took him twenty-four days to travel up the Hudson River, along the Erie Canal to Buffalo, across Lake Erie to Toledo, and down the rivers and country roads to Vincennes, Indiana.

### **The First Step**

After working there for a year in a small parish, he went to the Bishop in dissatisfaction. What he really wanted to do was to start a school. Then the Bishop remembered—that tract of land up near the border of Michigan. Only a few hours away today, but

eleven days by oxcart then, found Father Sorin standing on the wooded shore of a frozen lake, where he surveyed his assets—a few hundred acres of land, a drafty log cabin, seven devoted religious helpers, exactly \$541.12½ in cash, and an oxcart full of household goods. Perhaps his greatest asset was intangible—the vision in his heart of what *could* begin here, the faith that it *would* take root and grow. The late November afternoon sun glistened on the newly-fallen snow. It reminded him, he tells us, of the spotless purity of the Mother of God, so he called the place after Our Lady, Notre Dame, in his native tongue.

School began almost immediately with two students; one, the nephew of the fur trader, Alexis Coquillard, who had founded the nearby town of South Bend nineteen years before. There were the usual birth and growing pains. Hardly were they organized, when the cholera wiped out most of Father Sorin's staff. Money was always so scarce that the Community had to live on tuition payments in livestock and vegetables. But the University was soon chartered by the State legislature, thanks to the kindness of a Methodist Senator who presented the necessary legislation. Buildings were built and enlarged; the student body grew with them.

### **A Real Crisis**

There came in time the real crisis that could have meant the death of Notre Dame. The progress of the past thirty-seven years could be visualized in a large main building that contained the classrooms, dormitories, laboratories, library—indeed most of the facilities of the growing university. One evening in April of 1879, all of this was burned to the ground. The young man who had come to this spot at twenty-nine years of age, stood now at the advanced age of sixty-six and saw the fruit of so many years of labor in smouldering ruins.

It would have broken a man of lesser stature than Father Sorin. He gathered his helpers around him the next day in the University Chapel, which had been saved. "This fire has been my fault," he said. "I came here with the vision of a great university and named it after the Mother of God. Then, I built a great building, so I thought. But she had to burn it to the ground to show me that my vision was too narrow. Tomorrow, when the bricks are cooled, we will clean them and begin again. But this time, we will build a really large building, and when it is finished, we will place a magnificent Golden Dome above it to show to all the glory of Notre Dame, the Mother of God, who has inspired my life's work."

### **A New Beginning**

We do not know how they did it without long-developed plans, without money, with only that will to do the seemingly impossible. They began the building in late April. The students were back in school occupying the new building by September. The Golden Dome which then seemed like utter folly was placed high above the huge new building to become the landmark of Notre Dame throughout the world. I am writing these lines today under the Dome in this same building.

We can swiftly span the seventy-five years that have passed since that day. Perhaps, the only graphic way to grasp the magnitude of all that has happened since the University was born is to compare these items. What began as a log cabin in the wilderness one hundred and twelve years ago is now a University with more than fifty buildings, covering some 1,700 acres of land. The original cash assets of slightly over \$500.00 are matched today by an annual operating budget of \$10,726,700.00, with a current building program totaling \$10,000,000.00 more. Within a few months span, we

have dedicated the new I. A. O'Shaughnessy Hall of Liberal and Fine Arts, the Nieuwland Science Center, the Morris Inn, the Fred J. and Sally Fisher Memorial Residence Hall, and a modernized heat and power plant. The small staff of seven men has now grown to 1,600, and the two students would be amazed to see the 5,100 young men, of all races and creeds, from every State and thirty-six foreign countries, who study here in thirty-five different academic departments this year.

You may think that the story ends here—but, in a sense, this is hardly the important part of the story at all. I said earlier that a university is like a person. You do not know a person if he is merely physically described to you as being of such a height and weight, with brown hair and blue eyes. The most important part of a person is not his body at all, but his soul, for it is the soul that gives life to the body, snap to the eyes, purposefulness to the stride, and vigor and direction to the years of his life. So it is with a university, too. You cannot truly know a university from a description of its physical assets of brick and mortar, budgetary dollars, numbers of staff and students. Within limits, these are common to all universities.

### **The Spirit of Notre Dame**

It is the spirit behind all of these things that gives a university its true stature. Consequently, I cannot tell you the full story of Notre Dame without trying, in some measure, to communicate to you a sense of its spirit.

Nothing is more difficult to describe than spirit, since spirit is by definition intangible. We can only know it by what it does, so I shall try to describe for you what the University tries to do with the thousands of young men who spend four of the most important, formative years of their lives with us.

I would like to summarize our task in three points. We receive from parents a boy of

eighteen or nineteen. We hope, first of all, to return him to them at twenty-two or twenty-three a *good man*. We hope, secondly, that in his years with us he will attain some measure of *professional competence*, and, thirdly, that he will return home endowed with a sense of *moral and social responsibility*. And, now, a few words about each of these aims.

### Forming a Good Man

First, how can a university educate a boy to become a good man? A more basic question is: What is a good man? Our answer to this question is that a man is good only if he perfects those powers that make him a man and differentiate him from an animal. The specifically human powers are those of his soul: the power to know the truth and the power to choose freely what is good in life.

As a university, our specific task is to train the mind in its quest for truth. We do not conceive of this task merely as one of filling the mind with information, to make the young man an animated encyclopedia. Rather, we believe that the perfecting of the mind is bound up in four basic abilities—1) to think clearly, 2) to communicate one's thoughts effectively by word and writing, 3) to make valid judgments in conflicting matters, and 4) to evaluate clearly what is important and unimportant in life. These abilities are not easily achieved. They are the result of constant exercise and training. We think that this training can be done most effectively by confronting the young man with the basic issues in life, by helping him to reach serious convictions regarding a basic set of absolute truths and values. We are not satisfied if he is only able to parrot the right answers. He must have thought through the answers, right and wrong, and be able to give intelligent reasons for accepting certain answers and rejecting others.

Some educators would say that the work

of the university stops here with the training of the mind. We think differently, because Notre Dame is not merely a place where a boy attends class and exercises his mind with studies. Our students *live* at Notre Dame. We stand in the place of their parents for four years. Consequently, we give much additional attention to the important educative work of training the will.

You may call it moral training, character guidance, or anything else you will. There is perhaps no more difficult kind of training, as all parents know. And yet, this formation of good moral habits and solid character is an essential element in the good man we are trying to produce.

I might say from the outset that we think God is all-important in this formation. We don't apologize for giving Him a key part in the process. Someone has described character as the habitual choice of the right way of acting through life. We are willing to admit that there are many times in life, times of crisis, when it does not suffice to know the right thing to do. Doing it is the rub, as Shakespeare says. We have a chapel in every residence hall, with regular services morning and evening for the Catholic boys. We encourage all the boys to develop the habit of stopping in for a prayer, to get the help necessary for the extra push. We have a priest living on every floor of every residence hall, for a word of advice when needed.

We have discipline, too, because we do not know how to condition the will except by exercising it to do the right thing, even when it is not the easiest course of action.

The result of this training of both mind and will might be best described as a good man, who is good both in mind and will, because he knows what God expects of him in life and he has sufficient character to follow God's will. We hope that the finished product will be good in both intelligence and

character, because a man is not truly good unless he is trained to excellence in both mind and heart. The world has had its fill of brilliant men who are immoral, and good men who are stupid. St. Thomas has summarized all of this by saying that only three pursuits are worth our effort in life—to know the right things to love, the right things to hope for, the right things to do. We hope that the spirit of Notre Dame equips our students to discern these right things to love and hope for, and to do them through life. So much for what we mean by attempting to produce a good man.

### **Professional Competence Necessary**

The second point in our efforts is to educate our students to some measure of professional competence. Here, we find ourselves astride the current controversy of liberal education versus vocational education. We are living in an age of science and technology. Many educators think that this should indicate a purely vocational purposefulness to education. A boy in college should mainly learn the techniques required to be a chemist, a metallurgist, a nuclear physicist, a business administrator or a lawyer. To this extreme, we answer that all of us should learn, first of all, how to be a man, with all that implies. An electronic computer can work more efficiently than a mathematician, but it isn't human. Only a basic liberal education can teach us how to be human.

At the other extreme, there are those educators who shun vocational training as though there were something immoral about acquiring enough professional competence in some specific area of human endeavor to acquire a job and mature in it after four years of college education. In answer to this extreme, we do have within the University Colleges of Commerce, Law, Engineering, and Science, as well as a College of Liberal and Fine Arts.

Perhaps, it would be fair to say that we try to stand between the two extremes of this educational controversy, and to build a good measure of professional competence on a strong base of liberal education. We take this stand because we think that only a liberal education prepares a man to answer the really important questions in human life. You have all been confronted with these questions—what is the meaning of man and his life on earth? Why do men live together in society? Is the state for man, or man for the state? Can we learn anything certain about these questions, about what is really important in life? Are there things of eternity more important than the temporal troubles of this life? Values of the spirit more important than the values of material things? What of liberty, and authority? What of truth and error, knowledge and opinion, beauty and ugliness, pleasure and pain? Are there basic truths and values really worth living for, fighting for, even worth dying for?

These are questions that have perplexed the minds of men for centuries. They can't be solved by mathematics—even advanced calculus. They can't be studied through a microscope, even an electronic microscope. These are essentially questions of the mind and can be solved if the mind will wrestle with them. Faith can help, too, and should be taken into account. Great minds have written a wealth of answers. Divine Revelation has supplied others. We feel that this great heritage of Western culture from the Greco-Roman times to our own has been sadly neglected.

Without a clear understanding of these basic questions and answers, studied in the great classical writings of theology and philosophy, literature and art, history and social science, mathematics and the physical sciences, the best technician, who is only a technician, will be unprepared to use his techniques intelligently, purposefully, and with the integrity

that the modern world needs. Hence, our insistence on a strong liberal base. If our students acquire the wisdom of our Western culture, we feel that they will be better engineers, scientists, teachers, lawyers, and businessmen, because they will know, first of all, what it is to be a man.

Having made this point of a strong liberal base for specialized technical training, we must add that we do not think that professional competence should be lessened because of this Christian cultural background. We are constantly trying to improve our professional training in the various colleges of the University. We are currently doing over a million dollars worth of research every year to keep abreast of the frontiers of discovery. We want our students to share the thrill of this discovery, and to keep alive the great traditions of Notre Dame, where the first wireless message was sent in America, where the basic formula for synthetic rubber was discovered, where the first law course was taught in an American Catholic school, where the first wind tunnel was erected for aeronautical research, where the first germ-free animals were produced.

Today, these traditions are being kept alive in an atmosphere that wants no mediocrity that would lessen the professional competence of the Notre Dame men of tomorrow, be they in business, engineering, science, or law. True, the spirit of Notre Dame wants to produce intelligent and good men, but we will never view brilliance or piety as a substitute for competence. We want our men to know, love, and serve God. And how is God better glorified than by intelligent and devoted service to our fellow men, in the line of our chosen life's work. Neither God nor man is well served by mediocrity.

This brings us to the third and last manifestation of the spirit of Notre Dame: We are

trying to engender in our young men a real sense of moral responsibility. We say this largely in reference to the social areas that will form the context of our students' lives following graduation. America today is on the brink of a great adventure. We hope that the young men whom we are educating at Notre Dame will be prepared to take a key part in directing that adventure.

### **Moral Responsibility**

This training begins the day a student arrives at the University. Here the boy can immediately recognize democracy in action. He is living with hundreds of other boys from all over America. There are no special groups. Each boy must win acceptance by what he is himself. His father's wealth or lack of it does not matter—living quarters are equal for all. He must learn to be a part, and a contributing part, of a larger group. To the extent that he succeeds, he will have good friends all over America in the years to come. All student activities, including student government, are open to all with no distinctions regarding social background, race, or religious preferences. One Protestant boy rose to our highest lay distinction of becoming in later years the Chairman of our Associate Board of Lay Trustees. Another became President of our Alumni Association. A poor boy, who worked his way through school, later joined the Congregation of Holy Cross and became President of the University.

The boys learn early that what really matters is what kind of a person they are, not what kind of a car their father drives.

In this atmosphere, a boy perceives that he cannot merely think of himself through life, that the social responsibility of leadership is one of the greatest opportunities that America affords. We try to develop this challenge of leadership, and to direct it towards

the three great areas that face our students upon graduation.

### **Moral Responsibility in Marriage**

The first and most basic opportunity for moral responsibility is in marriage and family life. Preparation here is of the essence. We have a Marriage Institute each Spring for our graduating seniors. In an eight-week session, we try to link the very real responsibilities of family life to the high honor and dignity of Christian marriage. Here is social life in its basic form. We discuss the all-important decision of choosing a qualified and capable life partner, the characteristics that make a good husband who will be worthy of the best kind of wife, the many practical factors and lasting human values that enter into successful family living. One wife wrote that the best thing she could say about Notre Dame is that it produces good husbands and fathers. We do hope that most of our graduates will first distinguish themselves this way, because here is moral responsibility that will touch the heart of America and keep it sound.

### **Moral Responsibility in Business**

The second area we emphasize is responsible leadership in business and professional life. Here we point out to the students that the world does not owe them a living, but only an opportunity to prove that they can make a living by intelligent and purposeful effort. There is no substitute for hard work, competitive endeavor, and integrity. We want our men to be good not only for themselves, but good for the others in their business or professional groups. This calls for the discipline that is part of Notre Dame life, to live not as a passive unit, but as a contributing part of a larger group that is perfected by cooperative effort, teamwork, and responsible leadership. We want Notre Dame men to be re-

spected and liked for their sense of organization and their spirit of contribution to the good of the whole. We have taken pride in the fact that so many Notre Dame men throughout America are coming to be known and respected for this fine quality in their business and professional life.

### **Moral Responsibility in the Community**

Lastly, we insist that moral and social responsibility has a large part to play today in civic life—be it on the local, state, or national level. We hear so many people decrying corruption in political life and damning the cancerous spread of Communism. We, too, condemn these things, but cannot think that condemnation alone will help matters. The negative approach does not fill the gap. Moreover, it is largely pessimistic and frustrating. The world today needs intelligent and responsible leadership more than negative condemnation. We hope that our graduates will make some positive contribution to the political well-being of our local, state, and national life by actively participating in political action. Once more, here is a duty that is better viewed as an opportunity to serve. Here again, the future of America is at stake. We cannot have a first-rate country if it is run by second-rate public servants. Only men of intelligence, moral integrity, and devotion to ideals can keep this country attuned to the fine traditions that have made it great among the nations.

The seniors at Notre Dame make only one parting gift to the University—an American flag that flies over the campus during the year following their graduation. We accept it as a symbol of their loyalty. To this day, we have never been shamed by disloyalty in any of them. We hope we never will.

This concludes our presentation of those aspects of our educational philosophy which seem best to describe the spirit of Notre Dame.



You might well ask me at this point, are you *wholly* successful in educating boys to become good men, of professional competence, endowed with a sense of moral and social responsibility? I would be less than honest if I told you that we are highly successful in accomplishing this purpose with *all* of our graduates. Like all other human endeavors, we have our high hours of success and our depressing moments of failure. But, I can say sincerely that the ideal that I have presented to you is our consecrated commitment, the spirit that has quickened the one hundred and twelve years of Notre Dame's existence.

### **Looking Ahead**

We can do better. The terms of improvement are threefold: better faculty, better students, and better facilities. Each year sees improvement along this threefold front. Our deep gratitude goes out to so many friends of Notre Dame who have sponsored this improvement.

Only one last thing I must say. Perhaps it is best expressed in a personal experience. Often at night, when work is pressing, I walk over to the office after supper. My thoughts are often dark as the night when I reflect on the problems that face us: rising costs, inflated money, personality conflicts, the magnitude of the task to be done, and our own inadequacies. Then, as I round the corner of Sacred Heart Church, there is the ever-thrilling sight of Our Lady's golden statue, mounted on a massive Golden Dome, bathed in light and silhouetted against the darkness of the night. Here, at a glance, is our hope for ultimate success, the reason for whatever success has been achieved, because while we come and go, Notre Dame remains as a kind of living miracle of the Mother of God, a strong and golden force against the bleak darkness of every evil.