

Excerpts from an address prepared for delivery by
Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of
The University of Notre Dame
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"...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..."

"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..."

"Some educators would say that the work of the university stops here with the training of the mind. We think differently....Consequently, we give much additional attention to the important educative work of training the will.

"You can 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..."

"The result of this training of both mind and will might be best described as a good man, who is both good 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."

"...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...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...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..."

"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....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."

"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...."

"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....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 in this way, because here is moral responsibility that will touch the heart of America and keep it sound."

"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...."

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 world today needs intelligent and responsible leadership more than negative condemnation...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."