

[4-4-1961]

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The oldest essay in the book brings back memories. I had been President for nine years when the National Catholic Educational Association asked me to give their annual keynote talk in Atlantic City. I had been wanting to get my best thoughts together about the notion of a Catholic university in Twentieth Century America. So much of the thinking on the subject seemed to me irrelevant, medieval, and unrelated to the problems I had been facing. The world was going into a period of great change with the election of President Kennedy, Pope John and the beginning of Vatican Council II, and a slight easing off of the cold war. I had been on the Civil Rights Commission for four years, on the National Science Board for seven years, working annually with the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna for five years. The Space Age was barely born. Shortly before this meeting which always followed Easter, Sarge Shriver asked me to go to Santiago to negotiate the first university Peace Corps project with the Chilean government. I was there over Holy Week and then visited the family of my adopted six youngsters in Buenos Aires.

I remember flying back from Argentina just the day before this talk was due. Those were still the days of propeller planes. It was a long flight, stopping in many places.

Rereading the talk, I am sure that I again studied Newman's "Idea of a University" before writing it. I am also sure that I did not find it greatly helpful in the world in which I was then living. Yet the basic idea was sound and it did help. Today, I find the essay a bit theoretical, but basic for the day in which

it was written -- a day in which many very exciting things were beginning to happen and we needed to become updated in our thinking, even about Catholic universities.