

(Remarks made by the Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President, University of Notre Dame, at the Memorial Service for Dr. John H. Knowles, Boston, Massachusetts, March 16, 1979)

IN MEMORIAM: JOHN HILTON KNOWLES, M.D. (1926-1979)

John Knowles is one of the few people I know who left instructions for his funeral and memorial service. He wanted those of us who speak of him today to celebrate his life rather than to mourn his death. That seems to me to be good Christian advice, since the ancient Preface for the Mass of Requiem says: "In Him, who rose from the dead, our hope of resurrection dawned. The sadness of death gives way to the bright promise of immortality. For your faithful, Lord, life is changed, not ended. When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death, we gain an everlasting dwelling place in heaven."

The life of John Knowles was relatively brief, but uncommonly full. I think of it in three phases. First, the time of youthful ebullience, a nine-letter man at Harvard, a measure of carefree frivolity through college that made it difficult for him to find acceptance at a medical school. Once admitted to Washington University, and safely on the road to his chosen profession, he graduated first in his class, and never thereafter settled for anything but the best. There was in these youthful years the great joy of marriage and children, the early practice of medicine, the acquisition of high competence in his specialty, the writing of a book still used in medical education, and the acceptance of great responsibility as the youngest director of the Massachusetts General Hospital at the age of 35.

The second phase was his life for the years as director of MGH. Always restless with what is, in spite of what might yet be, John created nine new intensive care units at the hospital and set up a medical station at Logan Airport with a video link to the hospital. Everything he touched was modernized and updated. All the difficult questions were asked about medical delivery. He was not one to shrink from giving the difficult and unpopular answers, the critical judgment if it was needed. Through all these years, he never forgot that he was quintessentially a doctor. He regularly made the rounds, treated his patients, grew in medical lore, lectured and wrote, in a word, lived for the good of others as only a good professional man can and should do.

The third phase, the one when I became John's colleague and friend, covered the last seven years of his life when he served with spirit, verve, and untiring dedication as the President of the Rockefeller Foundation. This was the culmination of his life of service, now enlarged by the Foundation's motto: "For the well-being of mankind everywhere." Beyond New York and Boston, he now ranged the world of Latin America, Africa, and Asia, with all its human problems. Beyond medicine, he assumed new leadership in agriculture, the humanities, the cultural arts, especially his love, music, urban and rural development, universities everywhere, the resolution of international conflicts, theology, human rights, unemployment, environment, population, and then full circle back

to the neglected tropical diseases. He read omnivorously, he ranged widely, he questioned everything, he spoke and wrote, encouraged and cajoled, complimented and criticized. He made many people happy and some quite unhappy.

Mostly he enjoyed being what he was: a very energetic, hard working, enormously curious, imaginative, and creative medical doctor who was enthusiastic day after day in the quest of curing mankind's ancient ills of hunger, illness, poverty, repression, rootlessness, and hopelessness. He died in full flight, like a wild bird on the wing, sensing the far horizon, savoring the beauty at hand, but still reaching out eagerly for the vaster beauty beyond. I pray that the vaster beauty surrounds and embraces his restless spirit, now at rest, even as he was so lovingly embraced by his wife and children and countless friends who walked and ran and soared with him along his pilgrim way during the years he was with us.

Nick C.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
THE MEMORIAL CHURCH



*A Celebration of the Memory  
and the Love of*

JOHN HILTON KNOWLES

1926-1979

Friday, March 16, 1979  
1:00 P.M.



All those attending this service are invited to attend  
a reception at 17 Quincy Street and the Harvard  
Faculty Club.

WORDS OF COMMEMORATION

REVEREND THEODORE M. HESBURGH, C.S.C.

*Chairman of the Board;  
The Rockefeller Foundation*

Hymn:

**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**

Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott  
Martin Luther, 1528  
Tr. Frederic H. Hedge, 1852

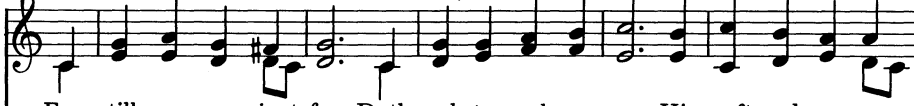
EIN' FESTE BURG 8.7.8.7.6.6.6.6.7.  
Martin Luther, 1529



1 A might-y for-tress is our God, A bul-wark nev-er fail-ing;  
2 Did we in our own strength con-fide, Our striv-ing would be los-ing,  
3 And though this world, with dev-ils filled, Should threat-en to un-do us,  
4 That word a-bove all earth-ly powers, No thanks to them, a-bid-eth;



Our help-er he a-mid the flood. Of mor-tal ills pre-vail-ing.  
Were not the right man on our side, The man of God's own choos-ing.  
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to tri-umph through us.  
The Spir-it and the gifts are ours Through him who with us sid-eth.



For still our an-cient foe Doth seek to work us woe; His craft and power are  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Je-sus, it is he; Lord Sab-a-oth his  
The prince of dark-ness grim, We trem-ble not for him; His rage we can en-  
Let goods and kin-dred go, This mor-tal life al-so; The bod-y they may



great, And armed with cru-el hate, On earth is not his e-qual.  
name, From age to age the same, And he must win the bat-tle.  
dure, For lo, his doom is sure: One lit-tle word shall fell him.  
kill; God's truth a-bid-eth still, His king-dom is for-ev-er. A-men.

