

University of Notre Dame
Religious Bulletin

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What An Ideal Can Do For A Man



We live in a cold-blooded, sneering world. This does not mean that there are no good people left; on the contrary, heroic virtue flourishes during periods of moral and spiritual degeneracy—it has to be heroic to exist. But we do mean that this is an age in which the spoiled child is philosophizing for the world, turning his hurt feelings, his wounded vanities, his selfishness, into social theories. Material prosperity fosters the spirit of selfishness, and the gratification of selfish desires breeds neurotic cynicism, so the spoiled child has his day.

The cynic says ideals are the bunk. Pragmatism is in the saddle. One of the arguments most frequently advanced against Christianity today is that it is not practical. (Those who say that, of course, have not tried Christianity, though they may have tried something that passed for Christianity.) A so-called "Christian" minister with a flair for the sensational has proposed that the churches of this country be turned to other uses on the ground that they are a total economic loss.

However, thanks be to God, the depression is wiping some of the sneer off the face of the cynic. We have lived to see the house of Materialism piling down about its ears. And we will see more,

much more, if the depression continues. It is pretty much of an individual problem, this discovery, when materialism fails, that things spiritual can gratify the soul, can bring a meed of happiness into a man's life, even when he goes hungry. If the depression continues long enough, the sophisticated cynic will have a hard time commanding a reading public. Before you know it, people will be re-reading the Sermon on the Mount, and ideals will come back.

Founder's Day at Notre Dame (the feast of St. Edward, patron Saint of Father Sorin, our founder) recalls the force of ideals in the working out of an idea. There was a dominant thought in the mind of this French priest who left his home and kindred to establish a university in the forests of Indiana. His great ambition was to make the Mother of God known and loved by young men. He knew that devotion to her had turned Europe from savagery to chivalry and had given birth to Christian culture; he knew that it could do the same for the young men of America. And it was only because he was devoted to an ideal that he overcame every obstacle in his path—fires, cholera, dissensions, persecution, everything.

Was his ideal justified? Your presence here is the answer. In ninety years the infant university that he nursed in that little brick building on St. Mary's Lake, near the Log Chapel, has grown into the full stature of a man, and is known and respected nationally and internationally. And it is famous for the healthy manhood and the clean ideals of the men who have passed through its corridors under that golden statue on the dome. A cynic has a hard time explaining away Notre Dame. And the happy Notre Dame man has a hard time understanding the cynic.

The Masses Tomorrow

7:30, in the hall chapels. (Offer Holy Communion in thanksgiving for Notre Dame.)

8:00, breakfast.

9:00, Solemn High Mass in the church, with sermon by Father Carico.

Prayers.

Mrs. Brennan, one of the donors of the Roger C. Sullivan Scholarships, is very ill.