

ADDRESS AT SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY AND BELLARMINE COLLEGE IN CALIFORNIA

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Fr. Michael Accolti was the first Jesuit to come to Northern California. When he arrived in San Francisco at the height of the Gold Rush, he wrote to his Jesuit Superiors, "Whether it should be called a villa, a brothel, or Babylon, I am at a loss to determine." I do not share Fr. Accolti's quandary regarding California. I am delighted to be here on the campus of Santa Clara University, the state's oldest institution of higher learning and the sole Jesuit school in this country named for a woman! The uniqueness of Santa Clara, however, lies neither in its location nor in its name, but in that it rests on the foundations of the Franciscan Mission established in 1777.

This mission heritage, the matrix from which both Bellarmine and Santa Clara have developed, challenges each of your institutions to maintain that tradition of service to and defense of neglected and exploited peoples. Without naively romanticizing the California missions or making light of their failures, we must acknowledge that at least one objective of the mission system itself was the protection of Native American peoples from neglect, abuse and exploitation.

Your two schools have more in common with Mission Santa Clara de Asis than the same geographical location. Santa Clara University and Bellarmine College Prep share with that original mission a responsibility to the overbooked and neglected people of this community and the world at large. A school is not a parish, the classroom is not a sanctuary, and the podium is not a pulpit. Your responsibilities are not those of a soup kitchen or a social welfare agency, but of educational institutions whose understanding, accuracy, research, scholarship and critical thinking offer society the guidance of intelligence, compassion and reason.

My intention today is not to present you with a set of conclusions or offer you a fool-proof formula for the success of your educational work, but to extend to Bellarmine and Santa Clara the challenge that confronts every Jesuit institution: how to participate more effectively in the "struggle between good and evil, between faith and unbelief, between the yearning for justice and peace and the growing reality of injustice and strife." I offer you the encouragement, support and gratitude of the Society of Jesus in your struggle to be true to your mission heritage and your identity as institutions of learning within the Jesuit tradition.

I speak as an alumnus of a Jesuit school, as a fellow academician, and as the leader of a worldwide educational effort that spans 65 countries, include more than 2,000 institutions of a

bewildering variety of types and levels, and involves some 110,000 Jesuit and non-Jesuit workers and close to 2 million students of every age. I assure you that the Jesuit commitment to education is as strong and as vibrant today as at any time in our 450 year history. But I also tell you quite frankly that contemporary Jesuit educational efforts on the secondary, undergraduate or graduate levels are not running on a “business as usual” basis. As my predecessor Fr. Arrupe insisted: “Our prime educational objective must be to form men and women for others...men and women completely convinced that love of God which does not issue in justice for humankind is a farce.” Both of your institutions are taking steps to enrich and diversify your respective communities: Bellarmine’s summer program for promising minority students in the primary grades; Santa Clara’s Project 50, its planning for diversity and its intensified recruitment of persons of color and varying ethnic backgrounds for faculty, staff and student positions are good examples. Such efforts are of the utmost urgency in California where I am told that the various minority populations will soon constitute the majority.

But in your efforts to make Jesuit education more accessible to the poor and the marginalized, do not neglect the middle class who are the majority within your schools. Your efforts, to open their minds and hearts to the world of the poor, plant seeds of justice that will surely flourish. You are well aware of the risk that education - especially in private schools - can serve only to fuel the upwardly mobile careerism of those who are already socially and financially advantaged, unless educational institutions themselves have their consciousness raised, critiqued and renewed. This means that as a community of scholars and teachers, in your work of teaching, research, writing, counseling and administration, you are responsible for the educational program that you offer your students. You have the opportunity to touch the minds and hearts of those with whom you work. Therefore, you bear a responsibility, both to your students and to the world beyond your campuses, to make sure that your curriculum does not become a means -- however unconsciously this may happen -- of safeguarding the cultural and social prerogatives of middle and upper-class families. For this reason the 32nd Jesuit General Congregation urged that in our schools:

Greater emphasis should be placed on the conscientization according to the Gospel of those who have the power to bring about social change, and a special place given to the service of the poor and oppressed. We must help prepare both young people and admit to love and labor, for others and with others, to build a more just world.

Behind this challenging mandate to all Jesuit institutions lies the conviction that education is never a neutral, value-free enterprise. All teaching and learning -mathematics and politics, literature or philosophy - communicates values, and these values can be such as to promote justice or to work entirely at cross purposes with that overarching objective of contemporary Jesuit education, the building of a more just and humane world.

The 32nd General Congregation specified the components as constitutive of a Jesuit education today: a privileged place for the poor and the marginalized in the consciousness of the academic institutions, a critical awareness of the massive inequities in our world that motivates faculty and students alike to informed and effective action for justice.

The Social Involvement Corps at Bellarmine and SCCAP at Santa Clara provide excellent opportunities for volunteer service to the disadvantaged members of the local community. Even more to the point is the university Eastside Project, which works through the established curriculum to develop in students and faculty a disciplined sensitivity to misery and exploitation. Those who have been schooled by a long history of suffering, privation and ideological manipulation have much to teach us about justice and injustice. They ask us to answer their questions and address their concerns, and teach us about the deadly effects of ignorance and prejudice and cultural isolation. St. Paul reminds us that God chose those whom the world considers absurd to shame the wise; God singled out the weak of this world to shame the strong. God chose the world lowborn and despised, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who were something.

We gauge the success of our educational effort not only by counting the numbers of our graduates who have become prestigious lawyers and outstanding physicians or respected members of Congress and brilliant Chief Executive Officers, but also by asking the further question of how they use their positions of influence and responsibility for those whose lives are marked by quiet desperation. A little less than thirty years ago, President John F. Kennedy challenged the citizens of the United States to land someone on the moon before the end of the decade and to eradicate hunger “within our lifetime.” We achieved that first scientific and technological goal, but the second more compassionate and humanitarian objective continues to elude our grasp.

At least 500 million people in the world today suffer from the ravages of hunger and 20 million of these people live right here in the United States. Those who will die of starvation in the course of my brief remarks to you outnumber all of us sitting in this theatre. Landing a person on the moon does not allow us to say that people are hungry because we lack the resources, technology, or human ingenuity to feed them. I do not mean to oversimplify the many complex socio-economic, political and even cultural factors that make the solution to world hunger such a difficult problem. I suggest that world hunger stems from lack of resolve, not lack of resources, technology or knowledge.

World hunger is one specter that darkens our world. We edge towards the 21st century haunted by a host of unanswered questions and unresolved problems. The world rightfully expects from you insight and direction to meet the new needs and situations that it faces. A by no means exhaustive list of such issues would surely include:

- Responsible and humane genetic research,
- The impact on society of hostile corporate takeovers and expanding multinational business enterprises,
- The search for meaning and values in a technological society,
- Public policies and social attitudes that threaten human life for the unborn, the disabled and the aged,

- Discrimination against and exploitation of whole categories of human beings, such as migrants, women and racial or religious minorities,
- Environmental abuses that contaminate the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land that feeds us,
- increased expenditures for more deadly and sophisticated weaponry that leave governments without adequate funds to wage war against poverty and illiteracy,
- The sad plight of millions of refugees in search of a permanent home,
- The search for meaning, which ultimately is the search for God.

The complexity and urgency of these concerns demand the vigorous, critical and probing study which is the heart of Jesuit education at all levels. These questions, and others like them, are too important to the world's future not to be integrated into your staff development programs, your research, your teaching and your curriculum, especially your prescribed course of studies. No school can allow a narrow concern for its academic future to blind it to the local and global issues that require the serious and disciplinary study that is Jesuit education's unique contribution to the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

Each of your institutions in its own way creatively counters the isolation and insularity of the "ivory tower" image often attached to schools. Bellarmine's "days of awareness" and its inclusion of social awareness units in required courses indicate an essential direction that other secondary schools can follow. Santa Clara University's Center for Applied Ethics capitalizes on areas of research and teaching that are central to the mission of a Jesuit university: ethical concerns, theological reflection, social change and an international outlook. Special university institutes like those on War and Peace, or on Poverty and the U.S. Economy, effectively marshal and coordinate resources and commitments from every sector of the university and engage participants in an interdisciplinary adventure with a global focus.

Decisions and directives from afar can never substitute for on-site imagination and initiative. But I would like to unleash your collective imagination and to further fire the energy and initiative that have placed your two institutions among the best schools in the nation. What you say and do for the voiceless poor of this world is as critical to the health of your institutions as the academic excellence that you strive to achieve. Your obligation to these persons comes not from the mandates of Jesuit documents or a rush to educational relevance, but from the radically human and divine concern for the least of your brothers and sisters.

Education, as you well know, empowers people. It liberates the human mind and spirit from false mythologies which distort our perception of reality. Education plays a major role in redeeming people from faulty assumptions and warped values, from cultural solipsism and historical amnesia. High schools and universities contribute significantly to the enrichment of culture and the full development of human beings, both within and outside their gates. The Church's commitment to education expresses its faith in the presence and power of God at work in this

world enabling human beings to become men and women for others. As educators in the Jesuit tradition, we self-consciously collaborate with God's own efforts in Jesus Christ to dispel the darkness of despair with the light of the Good News. May all of you at Bellarmine and Santa Clara, -- trustees, regents, staff, administrators, students and faculty -- know the blessings of the God with whom you work. May God bless you abundantly in your efforts.