

**FR. PETER-HANS KOLVENBACH'S ADDRESS AT
SAINT JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY
ALUMNI MEMORIAL FIELDHOUSE**

October 11, 2000

Good evening. It is an honor and privilege to join the Jesuit Community of Philadelphia on this most special occasion. Your anniversary is something to be celebrated by the Society worldwide, and we are delighted to share it with so many of you tonight. I thank Father Rashford and all who have made this grand reunion possible.

As I spend these few days with you in Philadelphia, I am reminded why it is called "The City of Brotherly Love." Look out amongst yourselves. The impact of your work in education, our Jesuit parishes and in countless other apostolates cannot be overstated. You and your lay colleagues are living the ideal, advancing our mission and bringing great benefit to your region. I congratulate you.

Just two weeks ago, hundreds and hundreds of pilgrims from this city came to Rome for the canonization of Katherine Drexel. As I witnessed the joy and celebration in Vatican City, I could not help but reflect upon my own visit to America.

Is there not inspiration in the great works of this new saint? There is a library named for her family at the center of Saint Joseph's campus. I am told she was awarded an honorary degree here in the 1940s.

Indeed, we are all pilgrims of the same faith. In the eyes of our Lord, the path to sainthood is no different than the day-to-day commitment each of you have made to core ministries in and around Philadelphia. There may not be sainthood for the masses, but there can be recognition of what it means to lead lives of faith and lives of service.

Herein lays the true significance of your Sesquicentennial celebration. It is much more than a proud look at our past; instead, this anniversary offers a renewed view of your collective possibilities.

Who could have imagined, when the Society founded Old St. Joseph's Church on Willings Alley, what would become of the Jesuits in Philadelphia? They were once driven underground and had to build a church physically hidden from the threats of those revolutionary times. Their work, like yours, was never easy.

Yet they persevered, and we must take a lesson from that. The Jesuits of Philadelphia-along with their valued lay colleagues-have created a legacy which continues to span the generations.

Today, St. Joseph's University is known worldwide for its outstanding education and commitment to service. St. Joseph's Prep stands among the very best secondary schools in the United States. The Gesu School provides invaluable service to a neighborhood hit hard by the ravages of the inner city.

On the other side of the Delaware, a river crossed often by the first Jesuits of this province, Holy Name of Camden is the centerpiece of a community trying to re-establish the essential values of faith, dignity and respect. The same could be said of Old St. Joseph's, a parish which remains both living history and a working link to the mission of our predecessors.

Fifty years ago in this building, St. Joseph's College marked its Centennial with a gala dinner for Jesuits, colleagues and benefactors. As history repeats itself tonight, let us be mindful that it does not take 50 years for meaningful change to occur.

We marvel at the technology of our world and what it means to daily life. We fear the unknown and, especially, its impact on the youth of society. But we must continue to blend the church and classroom of today with the fundamental faith of a simpler time.

Service to others is an enduring mission. *Cura personalis* remains at the heart of our enterprise. And we must never stop looking for God in all things, whether we find Him on the internet or in the eyes of the smallest child.

Father Rashford has reminded me that some of my writing is inscribed at the atrium of the beautiful business school across the way. I leave you with its words --not because they are mine, but because they encourage all who join in the important work of the Society of Jesus:

"We are called to be men and women who reflect upon the reality of the world --with all its ambiguities, opportunities and challenges-- in order to discern what is really happening in our life and the lives of others. We are called to find God there and to discover where God is calling you; to employ criteria for significant choices that reflect Godly values rather than narrow, exclusive self-interest; to decide what is truly for the greater glory of God and the service of those in need We are then called to act accordingly."

I congratulate each of you on answering that call. It is my ongoing prayer that, as you find God in all things and in all people, you also find Him every day within yourself. That, ultimately, is the source of our faith, our lives, our love and our reason for being.

Congratulations, again, and may God bless you all.