

Speaking Notes
The Honourable Noël A. Kinsella
Speaker of the Senate

On the occasion of receiving the
John Sweeney Award

St. Jerome's University
Waterloo, ON
October 2, 2010

I would like to thank the University for the opportunity to return to campus and renew friendships. It is great to be associated with the academic and values-based journey that is the hallmark of St. Jerome's University.

It is good to see the Members of Parliament present this evening, Peter Braid and Stephen Woodworth.

Yesterday in the Senate Chamber we held the Installation Ceremony for the new Governor-General of Canada, His Excellency David Johnston. It was a wonderful event and a great tribute to the University of Waterloo. I know that His Excellency and Her Excellency Dr. Sharon Johnston have many friends in this room and we all join in extending our very best to them both.

The ardour of the exciting vocation of St. Jerome's University, whether domestically or internationally, in the humanities, social science, in the fields of citizenship and social justice, shines brightly. I wish to congratulate the St. Jerome's community for your commitment and leadership and pray that you will stay the course and continue to

grow the institution's calling, based on the foundational values and principles, which your patron Saint would encourage.

Saint Jerome of Stridonium, who along with Augustine, Gregory and Ambrose, is one of the Great Doctors of the Church. In one of his letters, Saint Jerome writes:

“Be ever engaged, so that whenever the devil calls he may find you occupied.” [Letter 125]

I do not know whether or not that wise counsel had anything to do with the choice of your university's motto: *Splendescit Ardor Laboris* (Intensity of your work will shine forth), however, being engaged in the work of this distinguished academic community, certainly speaks to the Good.

It is therefore a great privilege to be associated with St. Jerome's University and an extraordinary honour to have been invited to receive the prestigious Chancellor John Sweeney Award. Though little deserved, I am thrilled, and wish to thank the University for your kindness.

To be associated with the name of John Sweeney in this way is to be inspired by a great Canadian who, in the words of St. Jerome: "...was ever engaged..." and lived the words of your motto; *Splendescit Ardor Laboris*. Your former University Chancellor is a model that we might all well imitate. In terms of this faith-based academic community, he brought to the campus, as the first lay Chancellor, integrity, commitment and deep compassion. His leadership in Catholic Education is legendary. As a public servant, he contributed to government and the people as a man of faith. He was right, throughout his life's journey, to be a public servant in His Footsteps. John Sweeney demonstrated to us that public service is a noble vocation.

In preparing for this wonderful evening, I spoke at St. Thomas University in Fredericton with Dr. Michael Higgins, one of your past presidents and friend to many in Waterloo. In Michael's exuberant fashion, using many "Higgins-esque words", he suggested that, if I was asked to speak, not to make it a learned lecture but rather make it autobiographical. This advice caused me some difficulty because of my limitations to achieve the former and the political danger of trying the latter. Adding to the difficulty was the admonishment that my Senate staff proffers when they remind me that just because my present office

in Parliament is titled “Speaker” it is not a license to speak on whatsoever topic, nor endlessly, as you will be relieved to learn.

It was then that I realized that John Sweeney and I were both from Saint John, New Brunswick. This is where the commonality probably ends, for John left New Brunswick and went West while I left Saint John and went East. Politically he fell into the tent of the liberals while I, having studied at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, received a significant conservative orientation.

Having gone West from his birth place, John Sweeney throughout his remarkable life of leadership gave truth to the Christmas story that the ‘wise men came from the East’! In my case, I went East in search of wisdom, which has eluded me to date. Dublin, Ireland was my first port of call and University College Dublin, which had Cardinal Newman as its founding rector as the Catholic University of Ireland. This university was built on the basis of Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman’s ideas of a university. It was a great event in England a few days ago when Pope Benedict XVI was present for the beatification of Cardinal Newman whose writings and ideas have been so seminal for those who journey in the work of Catholic post-secondary education.

Let the counsel of Blessed John Henry Newman be a beacon for your on-going travels here at St. Jerome's. Continue to seek the integration of faith and intellect. Know that theological understanding will greatly enlighten your work in citizenship and social justice, yet avoid any retreat from the world to engage in theological study; rather, engage in such study and let it be informed by what we learn from reaching out to those in need. Let your St. Jerome's experience be one that marks you as engaged Christians, not merely as hereditary Christians. Let the rich experience of the Waterloo science and technology environment be a door opener to the marvels that can positively contribute to our quality of life.

If society is to make the best use of these wonderful new technologies, it will be important to have erudite scholars who have a deep understanding of history, philosophy and theology. The moral or ethical basis of our civilization is every bit as important as the technological basis, and it is the moral or ethical basis which enables us to properly understand and put into context the on-going changes in our society. This proposition was advanced by John Henry Newman and underscored by Pope Benedict XVI in his homily on September 19th in Birmingham:

Cardinal Newman’s “insights into the relationship between faith and reason, into the vital place of revealed religion in civilized society, and into the need for a broadly-based and wide-ranging approach to education were not only of profound importance for Victorian England, but continue today to inspire and enlighten many all over the world. I would like to pay particular tribute to his vision for education, which has done so much to shape the ethos that is the driving force behind Catholic schools and colleges today.”¹

The Newman House on St. Stephen’s Green in Dublin has been a place for extraordinary conversation on the nature and mission of Catholic higher education, based on the Church’s intimate conviction that truth is its real ally – and that knowledge and reason are sure ministers to faith.

Gabriel Marcel came to Dublin during this period and challenged us with the question: “What can one hope to attain from philosophy?”

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, “Mass on the occasion of the Beatification of Venerable Cardinal John Henry Newman,” 19 September 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100919_beatif-newman_en.html

Inspired by the ensuing discussion the corollary question can be raised today: “What place does theology have in the universities of Canada today, and what is its relationship with other disciplines?”

As I mentioned, as a lay student in theology in Rome at the Pontifical Lateran University, the most conservative of the Roman Academies, I no doubt received my conservative analysis. This has afforded some practical political applications in Canada. However, we were clearly more influenced by great professors like Bernard Hoering and F.X. Murphy, than by Cardinal Ottaviani, whose motto was: “*semper idem*” (always the same). This was the time of Vatican II and Rome was a very dynamic place with many of our professors being “periti” or experts with the Council Fathers.

A most wonderful Italian theologian by the name of Antonio Piolanti was the Dean of the Faculty of Theology and physically a carbon copy of Benito Mussolini. He recounted to us one day that on a visit to England, he went to visit the tomb of Newman and reported he was so overcome with the emotion of the moment that he threw himself on top of the grave and laid prostrate and in ecstasy – clearly a sight to behold and fortunately he was not seen by the English Bobbies!

The Council Fathers' Document "Declaration on Christian Education" gives careful consideration to:

"...the paramount importance of education in the life of persons, and its ever-mounting influence on the social progress of this age."

John Sweeney knew, as the Council Fathers observed, that as the people of the world "grow more conscious of their dignity and calling, they prefer to take an increasingly active part in the life of society, especially in economic and political matters."

Your work at St. Jerome's University speaks to this vocation.

In conclusion, allow me to return to the counsel of your patron, St. Jerome who also spent time in Rome and where one can find his tomb in the Patriarchal Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore.

We all know the legend of St. Jerome removing the thorn from the lion's paw and the lesson not to rush to judgment on issues we face in life. But I like the Saint's wisdom when he advises us to take care as we

gather the rose from among the thorns. In life we face many paradoxes and apparent contradictions even as we seek the true, the good and the beautiful. The key for me is to try and remain focused on our vocation notwithstanding the contradictions around us. John Sweeney did this. On the occasion of the commencement of his third term as chancellor of this university, he observed:

The global economy was supposed to make life better for everyone, but instead it's left many people in its wake: the homeless, the poor, the unemployed. An institution like a university ... has the knowledge, the intellect to try and find a better way.

It was in this spirit of John Sweeney that three weeks ago I invited to Canada the Speakers of the G20 Upper Houses to find a better way to deal globally with the world food shortage and food security in order that millions of our brothers and sisters do not continue to go to bed at night on an empty stomach.

I am pleased to report that there was agreement among my global colleagues to promote common strategies to meet the world need for the production and distribution of food to all in our global village.

May the St. Jerome's community continue to know success and may this fine University continue to contribute to making life better for our brothers and sisters everywhere. I thank you and wish you safe travels '*ad multos anos*'.