

THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC COLLEGE STUDENT

We all remember that passage in the Gospels where Christ tells of the master who gave to one servant five talents, to another two talents and to another one. We can also recall that the master commended the two servants who had acquired more talents over and above those which they had received. This passage may be applied to the Catholic College students of today.

When we came into this world, the minds of all of us were blank slates, "*tabulae rasae*". But each of us however, had an intellectual capacity completely different from all other rational creatures of God. To some God gave the gift of a good memory, to others the facility of interpretation, understanding, or speech. Some of our rational brethren were endowed with the bare essentials of a rational nature, no supplementary gifts or facilities. Unfortunately, many of our fellow men who came into this world as "*tabulae raseae*" remain such to this day. For it seemed good to their Creator to deny them the proper use of the essentials of a rational nature, intellection and volition. Although He gave them the rational powers when He infused their immortal souls into their material forms, He saw fit in His Wisdom to deny them the proper use of such powers. More will be expected of those of us who have been permitted the use of our rational nature than of those to whom it is denied. Moreover much more will be expected of those of us who have received the plenitude of our powers together with the gifts and facilities pertinent to them. "To whom much is given, much will be expected."

Now let us clarify the point and relate it to our topic. As college students, we are a select group to whom the privilege of higher education has been granted. We have the opportunity, denied to so many others, of developing our intellectual capacities to their fullest extent and ultimate fruition. This opportunity is not due us in justice and we have no righteous claim to it. It is only through the sacrifices of our parents, families and friends that we are in the advantageous but responsible position in which we find ourselves at present. Advantageous, I say, because our college education is, as it were a master key to the doors of thousands of careers, many of which satisfy our quest of the career in which we wish to spend our lives. Such a valuable key has been denied to many and granted to but few. Among the multitude denied this key, many of us number our own parents, relatives and friends. This fact should en-

able us to appreciate all the more this great privilege granted to us.

But as with every privilege, so with this privilege, there is likewise attached to it a corresponding responsibility, and a serious one at that. Although all men are essentially and intrinsically equal, each is differentiated by accidental characteristics as intellectual capacity, brilliance, understanding, memory and fluency of speech. Thus, some men are intellectually superior and others inferior, and every superior is entrusted with a certain responsibility to direct and protect inferiors. So it is that the intellectual superior, the college student, is bound to direct the average person, not in the same sense that the college student is to tell the average not-so-well educated person what to do, but such direction should be in the form of good example. The educated must lead the way to truth and goodness, for by their intellectual fitness they are better adapted to comprehend truth and goodness. The non-educated and those of merely primary education look to the higher educated for leadership and enlightenment, and it is the duty of the educated to provide these services.

Thus far we have been dealing with any college student. Now let us specify and restrict our discussion to that which concerns us more and which is more pertinent to our situation. The role of the Catholic College student is all that we have already laid down, and even more. The outstanding characteristic of the Catholic college student in contrast to the college student educated in a non-sectarian college is that besides acquiring a strong foundation in religion and morals which the secular-educated are denied, all other knowledge which of itself has no direct relation to, or bearing on religion, is treated and accepted by the Catholic college student in the light of religion and morals. Religion and morality are the illuminating principles of all other knowledge, experimental and speculative. The non-sectarian collegian received practically the same information, but receives it from a different point of view and with different purposes in mind. The former has as the end of his knowledge, the performance of operations which will obtain for him material success in life, for this is for him the purpose of life. The Catholic Collegian, however, has as the end of his knowledge, operations which will lead him and as many others as possible to God, to virtue in this life and to eternal happiness in the next. For him the sole purpose in life, as he learned in his earliest days of formal education from his catechism, is "to know, love and serve God in this life and to be happy with him in heaven."

For the Catholic collegian, life is only the ante-chamber to eternity and must always be considered as such, not as the chamber itself. Because of the strong foundation which supports the intellectual edifice of the Catholic collegian, he has a tremendous advantage not only over the non-educated, but also over the secular-educated. He has a much deeper insight into life and things of the world than does the latter. While the secular-educated see all in terms of time and the finite, the Catholic collegian sees and applies all to eternity and the infinite. The former lives and learns for today and for himself; the latter for tomorrow and for all. Because of the advantages with which he is gifted, the Catholic college student is better adapted to carry out the duties which correspond to the privilege of education. He holds therefore an even greater responsibility than does the non-Catholic collegian. The Catholic college student must provide leadership toward a goal far beyond the material and finite. He is to enlighten and guide not only the minds and intellectual capacities of his fellow men, but their souls and spiritual capacities as well. He will lead them not only to material and intellectual fruition, but to spiritual and divine fruition. His conquest will end not in time but in eternity.

The Catholic college student has been endowed with gifts which he must not pass over lightly. He has been given these talents by his Master and Creator, not to bury in the ground of obscurity, negligence or lethargy, but to develop to their fullest extent and to employ them for the best interests of his fellow men and for the greater glory of God.

From Catholic collegiate ranks should come Catholic leaders. Our colleges should provide not only the greater part of our clergy but should provide the cream of our laity. Between the two, Christ's doctrine must be tough and his principles applied to all. It is to the Catholic college men that God gave the privilege of such an education, and not only the privilege but its corresponding obligations and duties as well. The obligations undertaken by the educated elite of the Church are indeed serious. There is a great intellectual need in the world today, and a corresponding duty on the part of our Catholic College students to fill this need. The theorists, philosophers and educators of our day, are in a transitional period the end of which seems to be at least materialism if not atheism. The trend of thought today is a turning away from God, if not denial of His existence, and an embracing of the material and pleasurable. The easiest thing for us is to sit back and say "what can we do about it? We'll mind our own business and save our own souls." An

uneducated person would perhaps be justified in adopting such a policy, but the educated Catholic College graduate and students are definitely not. As is pointed out above, we have received the gifts of intellectual development and perfection, not merely for our own sake, but in order to lead others to truth. The rampant materialism of the world, is exemplified in its chief propagator, communism, must be thwarted on its own level. We cannot meet the intellectual with material force, but only with intellectual force. And that intellectual force is embodied in the Catholic College students and graduates.

Our Catholic College men, in general, are not only failing to cope with this intellectual deficiency, but are even failing to fulfill the least which is expected and rightly so, from them, leadership in parish activities. Our educated men need a stimulus. It seems from history that the best stimulus for such inertia and inactivity is a proximate threat to their faith. The Church has always been nourished in the blood of martyrs. But such should not be necessary today, for surely truth can be attained at a less costly price. That price could be and should be the Apostolate of Truth, composed of dedicated laity and led by the Catholic intelligentia, the Catholic College Graduate. This Apostolate must be established, and so will be only when we, the Catholic College students and graduates, realize that the education granted to us has not been altogether gratuitous, but carries with it this corresponding highly responsible obligation.

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