

**God, Country, Notre Dame: The Autobiography of Theodore M. Hesburgh**

Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C

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# God, Country, Notre Dame

THEODORE M. HESBURGH, c.s.c.

WITH JERRY REEDY



NOTRE DAME PRESS

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To my mother and father for the early years, and to my colleague and friend Father Ned Joyce and my secretary, Helen Hosinski, for all the years since.





# Contents

Introduction to the Second Edition ix

Preface xiii

1. Growing Up Catholic 1
2. Learning 12
3. Teaching 34
4. Leading 50
5. On the Playing Field 71
6. Serving Others 87
7. Student Revolution 99
8. Flying High 123
9. The Mass 144
10. The Catholic Laity 159
11. Civil Rights for All 177
12. Friendship 200
13. Academic Freedom 209
14. The Holy Father 231
15. Forgiveness 249
16. Peace in Our Time 264
17. Starting the Future 286

Acknowledgments 297

Index 299



# Introduction to the Second Edition

Ten years ago, when Dick Conklin, Jerry Reed and I, with the help of Alvin Moscow and Bill Barry of Doubleday, launched this book, "I hoped [it] would have a good life, which means it will enter into others' lives." Now ten years later, largely due to the love and friendship of over one hundred thousand Notre Dame men and women and friends, more than three hundred thousand copies have been sold around the world, leaving interesting tracings, which I found even spread into China.

The book spent eleven weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list. It appeared also in paperback. Doubleday decided against another hardcover printing, but I still kept getting numerous inquiries for copies. Many copies crossed my desk for inscription that had been scrounged from secondhand bookstores. Again, thanks to Dick Conklin, now our associate vice president for university relations, the book is being republished by the University of Notre Dame Press. I will be eighty-two years old when the new edition appears, and my hope is that this edition will enter a few more lives, as it had during the past decade. Among the many letters I have received from readers, the ones that touched me the most are those from young men who say that after reading the book they are now considering studying and preparing for the priesthood. This reaction is the greatest reward of all. The profits from the book have gone into an endowment for our Notre Dame Law School's Institute for International Civil and Human Rights. Graduates who received a master's degree in law through that Institute are already hard at work in most of the troubled spots around the world, including Bosnia, South Africa, and Rwanda.

I should perhaps give a brief account of myself in this past decade. Following retirement in June 1987, Father Ned Joyce and I

traveled just about everywhere in the world (including Antarctica) to get away from the work we had been doing together for thirty-five years. All of our travels appear in a book, *Travels with Ted and Ned*, now out-of-print. I should add that we left the campus for over a year in order to give our successors, Father Ed (Monk) Malloy and Father Bill Beauchamp, an open field for their new endeavors. They have done very well and are both still on the job after more than twelve years. The University has grown and prospered under their direction and continues to move forward as a great Catholic university in our times—perhaps the greatest, if I might brag a bit on their behalf.

When we returned to the University in January 1989, Father Ned and I occupied adjoining offices on the thirteenth floor of the library, one of my favorite buildings on campus after the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and the refurbished Main Building with its Golden Dome. We still collaborate on many projects and have not yet had our first fight, despite the fact that he is quite conservative and I am quite liberal. He is a Southerner and I, a Yankee.

I had worried somewhat that retirement would mean sitting quietly in a corner, albeit a high corner on the thirteenth floor of a library now carrying my name, but the very opposite has happened. We have managed to keep very busy here and abroad. The mail continues to come in bushel-basket quantities.

I serve on several humanitarian foundations and carry forward other outside assignments, including a second term as a presidential appointee on the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace. There are many other assignments around the world that keep me busy, one of the most recent of which is a tripartite committee to keep peace in the Holy Land.

Every day that I am on campus, the office is filled with a long line of students, faculty members and alumni, mainly seeking advice on personal matters. This is core priestly work which I enjoy greatly. Every Sunday night during the school year, I offer Mass in the chapel of one of our student residence halls. It is a great consolation to see the jam-packed chapels, the enthusiastic fervor of the students, and the deep sense of Christian service which enriches the lives of so many. About eighty percent of our students are involved in service projects of every imaginable kind, bringing

inspiration and hope, especially to the poor and dispirited. I must admit that I growl every time I hear people say that the younger generation lacks spirituality or inspiration. They are the best, far better than I was at their age.

My final words to my successor when I left was to tell him, "Be Malloy and forget Hesburgh." During the past decade, I have worked out my own definition of retirement: Do as much as you can, as well as you can, as long as you can, and don't complain about the things you can no longer do. Thanks for the Good Lord and good health so far, I enjoy the role of being everybody's grandfather, especially while living in the midst of such a wonderful group of young men and women students and the dedicated faculty members who teach them.

On the health side, I am down to one eye because of *macula degenerans*, an affliction of my age group. However, I continue to remember the words of Frey de Carvajal, the chaplain of a group of Spanish explorers on the Amazon, when he wrote after losing an eye to an Indian arrow, "I pray to God that I may serve Him better with one eye now than I have done heretofore with two."

May I close with a final thought. The Holy Spirit is the light and strength of my life, for which I am eternally grateful. My best daily prayer apart from the Mass and breviary continues to be simply, "Come, Holy Spirit." No better prayer, no better results: much light and great strength.

Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.  
President Emeritus  
University of Notre Dame



# Preface

Someone once asked me what I would want engraved on my tombstone if I were allowed only one word.

“Priest,” I answered.

From the age of six I knew what I wanted to be: “Priest.” It was an integral part of my being. I just knew it. Having been a Catholic priest now for more than forty-seven years, I am happy in my choice. I want nothing else, have never wanted anything else, never *been* anything else but a priest. I say this now so that you, the reader, will know where I am coming from as you read the thoughts and events of my life.

I have traveled far and wide, far beyond the simple parish I envisioned as a young man. My obligation of service has led me into diverse yet interrelated roles: college teacher, theologian, president of a great university, counselor to four popes and six presidents. Excuse the list, but once called to public service, I have held fourteen presidential appointments over the years, dealing with the social issues of our times, including civil rights, peaceful uses of atomic energy, campus unrest, amnesty for Vietnam offenders, Third World development, and immigration reform.

But deep beneath it all, wherever I have been, whatever I have done, I have always and everywhere considered myself essentially a priest.

I prostrated myself before the main altar at Notre Dame and was ordained in 1943. Since then I have offered Mass every day, save one, and I have prayed the breviary each day, too. Even so, as I get older, it is increasingly clear to me that I know God all too little. I believe in Him profoundly, I pray to Him often, and I am grateful that He revealed Himself to us as Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Savior, Who became one of us and gave His life for love of us.

What is a priest? St. Thomas Aquinas said that a priest is a mediator; that he stands as a kind of bridge between God and humankind. The priest tries to bring God's word and grace to humankind and strives as well to bring humankind to God, in faith, hope, and love. I have tried to be that kind of priest.

Jesus said that when we feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoner, open our hearts to the stranger, we are really loving and caring for Him, especially as He is found in the poor and abandoned. Thus does God become a living and visible reality all around us. All human beings are our brothers and sisters, all are our neighbors, especially when in need. It matters not whether they are white or black, red or yellow, men or women, Eastern or Western, Northern or Southern, young or old, intelligent or dull, good or bad, attractive or repulsive. I believe that since we all are created in the image of God, I cannot love God without loving and serving them as best I can.

"What you did for one of these, My least brethren, you did it for Me," said Christ. If one believes this, it becomes a way of life. I think it was easier for me than for most others because I had the grace to be accepted into a religious order: the Congregation of Holy Cross. That meant, besides living in a great community of my peers, taking the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Poverty in the religious sense is a great blessing. I was freed to proclaim the primacy of the spiritual in life, not to be bound to the search for material possessions. I always had enough to eat, clothes to wear, a simple room in which to sleep, and money when it was needed for books or travel or incidentals. Actually, I came to deal with billions of dollars, but not for myself, not to have and to hold, but only to use for others in need. I always felt wonderfully free in a world too often shackled to material possessions: bank accounts, houses, cars, clothes, whatever. I had what I needed and needed nothing more. I raised and spent gobs of money, but always for good causes, for the good of those in material or spiritual need.

The vow of celibacy probably seems inhibiting or even unnatural to many, and it certainly is not a common calling. But for me, it has been, again, a liberating experience. Since I didn't belong to



anyone, I belonged to everyone. Each time I am called “Father,” I know that the caller owns me, as a child does a parent, and that he or she has a call on me for anything needed, especially compassion and understanding in the spirit of Christian love: loving and serving Jesus Christ by loving and serving all those in need, anywhere and everywhere.

When Christmas cards arrive each year, I am always reminded that so many of my lifelong friends and closest collaborators in good works are not Catholics or even believers. I have been inspired by all of them. I continue to love them and hope they love me. We have been comrades-in-arms in many difficult and trying crusades for justice and peace, for human rights, for economic, social, and political development in the Third World, for ecology, and for ecumenism.

In all these endeavors, especially those for His least brethren wherever they are, God knows that I am trying to love Him. In some mysterious way, I believe that these friends of mine who do not share my religious beliefs will also be seen by God as loving and serving Him, even though they may not realize it. I don’t worry about their salvation. They know why I am doing these things, and I am sure that God recognizes and will eternally reward their goodness, as St. Paul put it, *in caritate non ficta*, in unalloyed love.

The vow of obedience is the hardest in that one gives up that most precious of divine gifts, freedom. In obedience, one does what one is assigned to do. My whole life as a priest would have been vastly different, and probably less productive, had I been able to do what I wanted to do, instead of what I was assigned to do. On three occasions early in my priestly life, I was asked my preference in possible alternate assignments. I voiced my wish and each time I was assigned to the alternative. Somehow, it worked out for the best.

In a curious, almost contradictory way, I have always felt unusually free. As long as I performed my primary assignment, the Congregation of Holy Cross allowed me extraordinary freedom to accept nonclerical opportunities to serve in a wide variety of national and international tasks. During my presidency of Notre Dame, I served (albeit part-time and concurrently) for forty-five

years in the public sector and over sixty years in the private sector. That would not have happened if I had gone my own way in the beginning.

Again, in a curious and mysterious way which I attribute to the providence of God, although one seems to be giving up the familiar things that others enjoy—material goods, the wonderful pleasure of marriage and family, and one's precious freedom—somehow one still has an enormously challenging and satisfying life, which is to say, a happy one. I am under no delusion about being as holy as I should be—far from it—but at least I keep trying, and each day there is that palpable grace of God that somehow keeps me from going overboard, from taking myself too seriously, from losing hope. Through the years of learning and personal experience I believe I have become as much a realist as an optimist, and as such I do believe today with all my heart that within God's providence we can make this a better world.

As a priest, my faith and hope and love are in an eternal and not a temporal, terrestrial context. Even so, I am not about to default or give up on this globe we call earth. I still intend to spread faith, hope, and love as widely as I can during whatever time I am given to live here on earth. These three virtues are the keys to peace and justice and to a better and more equitable world.

God, Country, Notre Dame



# 1 *Growing Up Catholic*

Every family should have an Aunt Mary, or better still, a Great-Aunt Mary, someone who cherishes and keeps the stories and relationships of the important people in your life before you were born. My Great-Aunt Mary Hesburgh lived in a big, open, airy house on Staten Island in New York City, where she worked as a matron in a jail, and when I visited with her she, being a genuine storyteller, loved to “pile it on” for me.

According to Aunt Mary, the Hesburghs came to America from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg in 1848 during a big wave of immigration of young men fleeing the wars which tended to engulf the Low Countries of Luxembourg and Belgium. My great-grandfather, not wanting to be part of any of those conflicts, packed up his wife, two sons, and daughter, Mary, and came to America. One of those sons was my Great-Uncle Nick, who had gone blind in his late seventies and was living with Aunt Mary on Staten Island. The other was my grandfather, Theodore Bernard Hesburgh, my namesake except that my middle name is Martin, after my Irish maternal grandfather.

Grandfather Hesburgh was quite a remarkable man. He worked his way through college selling patent medicines door-to-door in New York. In order to do that he learned Yiddish, Russian, German, French, Italian, and Spanish, as well as English, and he would fascinate me with demonstrations of how you could say the same thing in so many different languages. His facility with languages delighted me and I am sure that’s one of the reasons I got interested in languages later on.

For most of his life my grandfather taught school. Somewhere along the line he started writing literary criticism and articles on economics and labor affairs for newspapers in New York. Despite his many gifts, my Grandfather Theodore had a lot of hard luck in life. His wife died at the age of twenty-one while giving birth to

their third son. The baby died, too. Then, about two weeks later, a pharmacist botched a prescription for my grandfather's two-year-old son, and the boy died of poisoning. So, within a period of two weeks my grandfather had lost his wife and two of their three sons. Undoubtedly these tragedies caused something within him to snap. He abandoned his faith in God, quit his job, left New York City, and took his remaining son, my father at age three, and went to live with Hesburgh relatives on a corn farm in Iowa.

In Iowa my grandfather resumed teaching—in a one-room rural school—and continued writing for newspapers. But he was not the same man. The joy of life had gone out of him. It was not long before my Great-Aunt Mary journeyed out to Iowa to fetch her motherless nephew, my father, back to Staten Island, where she could mother him properly. My grandfather gave his consent but stayed on in Iowa himself. Aunt Mary was living with the widow of her brother and the widow's son, Lonnie, who was the same age as my father. The two boys grew up together like brothers. My father finished high school by going to classes at night. That's where he learned to write the old Gregg shorthand, a kind of squared-off business shorthand that was popular back then. My mother wrote it, too, and come to think of it, so did Father John Cavanaugh, who was president of Notre Dame just before me.

I'm not sure exactly when my grandfather left Iowa, but I know it must have been several years after Aunt Mary came to collect my father. I know, also, that when he did move back to New York and took a small one-room apartment in Brooklyn, his luck didn't get any better. After enduring many years of failing eyesight, he went completely blind. This would be tough enough for anyone, but Grandfather was a voracious reader and blindness really devastated him. I never heard him complain. Not to be completely undone, he turned to the radio and I think he listened to it just about every waking moment in that little room.

When I was in my teens, my grandfather and I used to correspond. When his eyesight failed, of course, he couldn't write anymore, but he'd have his landlady read my letters to him. Occasionally I'd take that long trip from Staten Island to Brooklyn to visit with him. The last time I saw him was when I was in New York on my way to enroll at the Gregorian University in Rome. I was twenty

years old, so that would have been in 1937. I got there about nine o'clock at night and found him sitting all by himself in total darkness. I asked him where the light switch was. He said he didn't know, because a light switch couldn't do you any good if you were blind.

I groped around for a chair, found one, and sat down. Then I told him how bad I felt that he had given up his faith. I think I said something like "Here I am giving my whole life to God and you don't even believe in Him."

"I didn't say I didn't believe in Him," he then said. Given what I knew about my grandfather, that statement made no sense to me at all. We got into a pretty fierce argument, with neither of us giving an inch.

Finally, I blurted out with an excess of youthful zeal, "I think the only way I'm going to get you back to God is to pray and sacrifice a lot for you." When I got to Rome, I did just that: praying and making personal sacrifices for him.

Before long I received word that he had phoned my cousin Elizabeth Keuthen and asked her to take him to the rectory of the local parish. There he asked the priest to hear his confession and then he started going to Mass regularly.

When my grandfather grew ill, Elizabeth put him in a Catholic hospital, where, she told me later, he said the rosary and received communion every day. "He died like a saint," the nuns told Elizabeth. Nuns who work in hospitals tend to say things like that, but it was a nice way for Grandfather Theodore to go, given his general outlook on life and everything that had happened to him. And I don't mind saying that the manner of his death was also a great consolation to me at the time.

I can cover my mother's side of the family much more briefly, because I don't know as much about it. My maternal grandfather was Martin Murphy, an utterly delightful Irishman whose parents brought him to this country when he was seven weeks old. He was about as different from my Grandfather Theodore as anyone I can imagine. There's a story about Grandfather Murphy's going to a county fair when he was a young man and drinking too much cider. According to this oft-told story, Grandfather Murphy in his cups got up in front of a large group of people, danced an exuberant jig,

made a fool of himself by falling down on his backside, and then, feeling so embarrassed about it, swore off liquor for life.

Grandfather Murphy was a plumber who specialized in hot-water heating systems and lived with his wife on Franklin Avenue at 167th Street in the Bronx. He was a genial, lovable, fun-loving man who was also very religious and a daily communicant at six o'clock Mass. Tragedy struck when some obstetrical mishap resulted in his beloved wife's being confined to a wheelchair after she gave birth to their first and only child, my mother. When his wife died ten years later, Grandfather Murphy then married a rather sour spinster named Kilkenny, hoping that she would make a good mother for his only daughter. It did not work out that way. According to my mother, her stepmother rarely had a kind word for anyone and succeeded in making both my grandfather and her pretty miserable. She must have resented the close relationship between my mother and my grandfather, I think, because they doted on each other. Despite her stepmother, my mother managed to get through her growing-up years in pretty good shape.

After taking business courses in high school, Mother became the secretary to an executive at AT&T and, with the rapid growth of the telephone company at that time, believed she had a promising career ahead of her. Then, however, she met this tall, good-looking salesman who cared deeply for her. He turned her head and she changed her plans. Just about that time my mother, who had a lovely soprano singing voice, entered the Metropolitan Opera Auditions contest, and lo and behold, she won a four-year scholarship to study at La Scala in Italy. She gave that up, too, in order to marry my father.

I'm not sure how my mother and father first met, but I do remember my mother telling stories of parties in New York City and picnics on the Hudson. I got the idea they used to pal around together in a large group of young people, and so I suppose their relationship just grew naturally out of their social life. During their courtship my dad was sent to upstate New York by the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, the youngest salesman the company had ever sent out to develop a new territory. That did not stop him, however, from coming down to the Bronx regularly to see her. My mother's stepmother disliked my father intensely and did everything she



could to break their engagement. She even accused my mother of wanting to marry my father solely to spite her. But my parents were obviously very much in love, and they went ahead and got married anyway. The wedding took place on February 2, 1913, at St. Augustine's Church in the Bronx, the parish my mother had grown up in, and then they moved to Syracuse, where my father worked.

Sometime during the earlier years of their marriage my dad switched from horse and buggy to a Model T, one of the first, and he was on the road in the Model T five days a week; but every Friday, of course, he'd come home for the weekend.

I grew up with three sisters. The firstborn was Mary Monica, who arrived nineteen months before I did. After me came Elizabeth Anne, whom we always called Betty, then Anne Marie. All the time that the girls and I grew up together I prayed for a brother. At age sixteen I finally got one. My parents named him James, and naturally we all called him Jimmy. While we did not grow up together, because I left home when he was only nine months old, we did become close later on.

My parents' first home was a second-floor apartment on Midland Avenue in Syracuse. I was baptized in St. Anthony's Church, close by, and my first year of school was at the public school kindergarten, which was just across the street from our apartment. We then moved to an apartment on Arthur Street in Most Holy Rosary parish. All five of us started school there and, except for kindergarten, I got all of my precollege schooling at Most Holy Rosary School.

My dad moved steadily up the ladder at Pittsburgh Plate Glass, opening up new branch operations for the company in Rochester, Albany, and Binghamton, and becoming manager of the Syracuse branch. Like most couples tasting the first fruits of success, my parents bought a house in a brand-new development called Strathmore. I remember vividly the excitement I felt the first time I walked into our new home, the smell of fresh timbers, the freedom that came with not having someone living over us or under us. It was 1925 and I was eight years old. That was home for me, the house in which I grew up until I went away to college and the seminary. My parents and Jimmy lived there for a long time after that.

My parents complemented each other very well. My mother,

Irish on both sides of her family, was easily the romantic one of the pair. An aura of joy and merriment seemed to surround her all the time. She loved being with people; she laughed and sang even when she thought no one was around. My father by temperament was much more serious and sober about life. Maybe it was because of the hardships he knew as a boy and the influence of his father, but whatever the reason, he just wasn't a demonstrative, touchy-feely kind of person. Nor was he given to much gaiety. But he enjoyed life in his own way, taking a lot of satisfaction in his family and his work. He was steady as a rock, and when goodies were handed out, my father always took last place: We all came first.

Both my parents were very religious, though in ways that reflected their disparate personalities. While my father practiced his religion very quietly, my mother was much more vocal, open, and even flamboyant about church matters. They had their share of differences, as all families do, but there never was any doubt that they loved each other deeply and that a sense of love and faith filled our home at all times. My mother loved to travel, to go out and do things, and she spoke often of wanting to live in New York City for its theater, opera, music, and culture. My father, on the other hand, thought New York City was a miserable place of smoke, noise, and dirt, and he hated travel. After all, he was on the road five days a week and heaven to him was sitting in front of the blazing fireplace for hours doing crossword puzzles, or puttering around the yard, or strolling through the woods looking for ferns or bushes he could transplant into our yard. Summers were special, though, and my father enjoyed as much as everyone our ritual of driving up to a cottage on Lake Ontario for our annual two-week summer vacation.

Ours was a typical Catholic household of the period. My sisters and I all went to Catholic schools. Encouraged to be "religious," we never missed Mass; some of us went every day. We never ate meat on Friday. We never lied, stole, or cheated—at least we never got away with any such sins. And we never, never talked about sex—in any way, shape, or form. For me the highest calling in life was to become a priest. When I was an eighth grader and an altar boy, I found out about the Congregation of Holy Cross when four of its missionaries came to our church to preach fire and brimstone ser-

mons about sinners dying in whorehouses and spending eternity in hell. Because the altar boys were considered too young to hear such stories, one of the priests would take us into the sacristy, with the doors closed, to tell us about life as a Holy Cross priest. One of them, Father Tom Duffy, made a great impression upon me and before long he was urging my mother and father to enroll me in the Holy Cross high school seminary at Notre Dame the following year.

Though my mother approved of my wanting to be a priest, she felt I was too young to leave home. “No dice, Father Duffy,” she would tell him over and over. And I remember to this day her reply to his warning, “If he doesn’t come and he goes to high school here, he may lose his vocation.” She looked Duffy straight in the eye and said, “It can’t be much of a vocation if he’s going to lose it by living in a Christian family.” Mother had spoken, and that was that.

I enjoyed a wonderful time in Most Holy Rosary parochial high school. In the depths of the Depression, I scrounged like every kid my age to make pocket money. I mowed lawns, hauled coal ashes, sold newspapers, sold watercress and nuts I found in the woods, and in my senior year I worked forty hours a week at a gas station. Still, I had time for sports and play with my neighborhood friends, and, yes, lots of dancing and dating with girls at the high school. But even though I dated and partied as much as anyone in high school, I never wavered in my desire to be a priest. There were many nights when I’d roll in at 2 A.M. after having a good time and I’d just sit on my bed and say to myself, “This isn’t enough for me. There’s something more that I need out of life.” It was God’s way, I think, of letting me know that my vocation was more important than my high school social life.

Despite all these activities, my primary full-time job was schoolwork. My friends and I had four years each of English, Latin, and religion; three years each of French and history; and one year each of algebra, geometry, and chemistry. And I will never forget those devoted nuns who ran the school, taught us discipline, rapped our knuckles, and hammered the lessons into our heads—Sister Augusta, Sister Justita, Sister Q, Sister Delphina, and Sister Mary Veronica. Superbly prepared for teaching and all with master’s degrees, they received about \$30 a month in return for teach-

ing full-time, overseeing many of the extracurricular activities, and keeping the church clean. I wonder how many high schools today are providing an education that is any better than the one I received between 1930 and 1934.

Equally important as any of our academic studies were the sense of morals and the personal values we learned throughout the twelve years of our primary and secondary school education. In those days all schools, public and private, sought to instill in children a long list of homespun values which were taught philosophically, if needed, to avoid overtones of religion: It is better to be honest than dishonest, better to be kind than cruel, better to help than to hurt someone, better to be patriotic than not . . . Where are those values being taught today in our public schools? And if children do not absorb those fundamental values from their teachers or their parents, is it any wonder that they turn to the street smarts of the ghettos?

Throughout my high school years, Father Duffy and I kept in touch regularly, and when the day arrived for me to make up my mind about the seminary, Father Duffy gave me a choice. I could join the Eastern Province of Holy Cross in a brand new seminary at Stonehill College in Massachusetts or I could join the western province and enroll at the University of Notre Dame. It took me about one third of a second to choose the dream of practically every Catholic schoolboy in the country, and the following fall, off I went to Notre Dame.

One of the things that I'll always remember about my father was his deftness with words. He took great pains with words and always had a well-thumbed dictionary close by. Later on in his life he became addicted to crossword puzzles and developed a killer instinct at Scrabble, at which he beat me regularly and with great glee. I remember very clearly when he beat me after I had become president of Notre Dame. He turned to my mother and said, "They just don't make college presidents the way they used to."

When we were growing up, I was always closest to my sister Mary because we were the closest in age. We did a lot of our schoolwork together, and I remember that she was bright and very good in school. She also had artistic talent. When we'd do our homework

together at the kitchen table, she'd work for about five minutes and then start drawing. She sketched well enough to earn a fine arts degree at Syracuse University. After that, she taught art for a couple of years; then right after World War II ended, she married a dentist by the name of Al Lyons. Our affection for each other grew stronger as we got older. From the time I left home for the seminary in 1934 to when I was ordained some nine years later, I think Mary wrote me just about every week, although, understandably, her letters slowed down a little after she and her husband started their family: two boys who graduated from Notre Dame and two girls who graduated from St. Mary's and Maramount colleges.

My dad had his own pet names for all my sisters. His name for Mary was Sarah, I suppose because she was steady and the oldest. Betty he called Greta because she was the liveliest one of the three. She also had a great voice, like my mother, and sang in the glee club at New Rochelle College. After she graduated from there, she earned master's degrees in sociology and psychology. When she was left alone with six kids, the youngest being only three at the time, her advanced degrees enabled her to get a job as a high school counselor and gave her the financial wherewithal to keep her family together. All six graduated from Notre Dame.

I don't remember my dad's name for Anne—I think Agnes—but I always called her Tom because she was clearly the tomboy and athlete of the family. She did not care much for school, but she loved to bowl, to play golf, and to be outdoors running or jumping or doing something. She also had an incredible memory and could always beat the rest of us playing cards or in any game that involved remembering facts. Anne married a war hero named Jack Jackson, who was shot so many times that I think he spent half of his World War II service in military hospitals.

Anne was the only one in the family who did not go on to college, but among the rest of us there were four B.A.s, four master's degrees, and one doctorate. Considering the fact that neither of our parents had gone to college, the Hesburgh kids managed in one generation to bring the family well along in terms of its educational level. After the war ended, all three of my sisters were married within a year. I know their leaving home so close together was

quite a blow to my mother, because she was very close to them, almost like an older sister; they would borrow one another's clothes and nylons and jewelry and things.

So all of a sudden my mom and dad had no one left—except Jimmy, who provided them with a kind of renewed parenthood involving school, scouts, summer camp, and all the rest. Without Jimmy I think they would have been pretty lonely. During those years Jimmy developed a closeness to my dad that I never had.

Jim graduated from Notre Dame and later Harvard Business School after a stint as an officer in the Navy. The most intelligent decision he ever made was to marry his high school sweetheart, Mary Kelly. All of their six children attended Notre Dame. Five have graduated; Christopher is a sophomore. All four girls are married to Notre Dame grads.

Years later, when Mary had a mastectomy, the odds were five to one in her favor that she'd recover completely, but those odds weren't good enough in her case and the cancer either returned or came out from wherever it had been hiding. I knew she had always wanted to see Europe, so I suggested that she accompany me on a trip I had to make that summer. I made time for her to see places that would appeal to her artistic sensibilities, like the cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris and Chartres. I was in Mexico on another trip when I found out that Mary had only a short time to live. Naturally, I went to her as fast as I could. When I walked into her room in Oneida, New York, where she lived, I offered to say Mass for her then and there, saying, "But first I'll anoint you, if you want me to."

Mary knew her death was imminent and she was tough about it. "Why the heck do you think I sent for you, just for the fun of it?" she quipped.

"I have to ask you something before I anoint you," I said. "Do you want to go to confession?"

"I went to confession just before Christmas and it's now the third of January and I've been lying here sick in bed ever since," she replied with a glint in her eye. "I couldn't have done anything wrong if I'd wanted to." It was clear she neither needed nor wanted to go to confession, so I anointed her and said Mass. About a week later I was with her when she died.

Mary was only in her early forties when she died, and she had

four young children. The oldest was eight and the youngest two. As she was dying, she made me promise that I'd keep an eye on her kids and see to it that her husband married again as soon as possible. She even named the woman he should marry. The woman was the widow of a dentist to whom she had been married only three months. It took Mary's husband five years to get over her death and to marry the woman she had picked out for him.

A virulent form of liver cancer took my dad very quickly in 1960. Near the end he fell out of bed a lot. My mother, not strong enough to get him back in, would just spend the rest of the night sitting on the floor next to him. Just a few days before he died I went to Syracuse for his seventy-third birthday and was there to say Mass in his room and to anoint him. When he died, I remember that Jimmy broke down and cried. I kept in close touch with my mother after that, mostly by telephone, and I made it a point to visit or to take her on a trip every summer. She was always ready to take off to somewhere with me. I could call her from New York at noon and tell her to be ready to go to Canada at three and she'd be packed and waiting when I got there. She spent the last part of her life, needing twenty-four-hour care, at a place called Loretta Rest, run by the Franciscan Sisters in the Syracuse diocese. When she got old, my mother always told me, "I don't care if you go tooting all over the world, I want you here when I'm dying." I did not let her down. Jimmy, Betty, Anne, and I were with her during her final forty-eight hours, and when she died in her seventy-ninth year, we were gathered around her bedside.