



**Chancellor's Homily
The Rt. Rev. John Howard
The University of the South
Board of Trustees' Eucharist
October 2012**

Yesterday morning, as I sat listening to our Vice-Chancellor's report, it was confirmed to me the reason why I love Sewanee and the University of the South so much. I listened to Dr. McCardell speaking about priorities and the good things that are happening, and the exciting events that will happen in the future here and among us. For the first time in my life, I heard the president of a distinguished liberal arts institution say that the *US News & World Report* rankings simply do not matter, nor should they matter, to us in any sort of *ultimate way*.

Oh, it is good to get the high rankings from *US News & World Report*. It will help our admission numbers grow even more next year, and I'm sure our rankings will go up. As I heard Dr. McCardell cite some of the findings of a recent survey by The Alumni Factor I was heartened, I was encouraged and I was moved. The outcome uncovered how we really should go about the process of knowing how good our college is; how rich the total

educational experience for our students is; and what the relationships between faculty and students, administrators, alumni, and benefactors need to be.

In part, he said we should be judging the quality of education our students receive by whether they would recommend this college to others; by the sorts of friendships that are formed during the four years here; by a broader evaluation of intellectual development and social development than any of those which a simple 1 - 150 ranking can give; and interestingly and most heartwarmingly to me at least, high on that list of factors we should be considering when we look at the quality of education and the experience of education in this university, is the factor of spirituality.

Spirituality – I'm not sure I've ever heard that word fall from the lips of another liberal arts college president, but John McCardell talked about it. He told us yesterday that spirituality is one of the most important factors in the quality of education that our students receive. That, my dear brothers and sisters, is what excites me about Sewanee. That kind of broader, all-encompassing view of student experience, that sort of look at the totality of life, and what four years here can mean to a young person.

It took my mind back to a little book that was published almost exactly 20 years ago. George Gallup, the pollster and devoted Christian layman, wrote a book with a man by the name of Timothy Jones. The book was entitled *The Saints Among Us: How the Spiritually Committed Are Changing Our World*. In that book Gallup and Jones set out to find Americans for whom God is a vibrant reality and for whom Christian commitment makes a

difference in how they actually live. Gallup, of course, went through extensive polling and looked at the totality of the lives of, I believe, over 1,000 people. He came up with a finding that about 13% of the American population are really committed, spiritually aware Christians.

He found that often the saints among us are perhaps not surprisingly the poorest, in some cases the least well educated, and in many cases, those who have suffered great tragedy in their life. They are the people for whom the life of prayer is real, for whom spirituality tends to be more of an internal experience than an outside, external commitment to an institution. They are people who want to do good for others in every way they can, by demonstrating exceptional compassion. They are people who, whether black or white or red, show colorblind love; and they are people who, and this one I really like, are generally speaking, optimistic and happy people.

The one thread that runs through the saints among us is humility. They understand who they are, they understand their relationship to their neighbor, and they understand their relationship to God; they recognize that they are *not* God but that they've been put among us to serve others, to love others, and to make this world a more joyful place in which to live.

As I sat yesterday and listened to the Vice-Chancellor talking about the totality of education, about what really can change and mold and make the young men and women who come here stronger, abler and happier, I thought back to that little book about the

saints among us. I thought, too, about how appropriate it is that this place is named All Saints' Chapel. What a wonderful thing it is, that for four years, we have the ability to not only make scholars, not only to create and build up young men and women of scholarship and of achievement, ones who will go on into the world to do great things, make lots of money, and give high percentages of it to dear old Sewanee, but we also have the ability to actually lift up more saints among us. Part of the Sewanee education, part of the experience must be, ought to be, has to be, not just the molding of young scholars but the creating of young saints, men and women of humility who know their God and worship Him, who know and serve their neighbor and who understand who they are in relation to the One who created them, saved them, and who preserves them.

These are modest thoughts for a day on which we enter into duties as Trustees and for me a new position as Chancellor of the University. Simple as these thoughts may be, they're some that I felt called to share with you on this day. I hope that the vision of creating saints, the vision of helping young men and young women to understand who they are, who their God is, and why they should serve their neighbor, is a calling that we all can share. Amen.