

Mass of the Holy Spirit
Mission Church, SCU
7 October 2009

Let me repeat my welcome to all groups present and, in particular, to our colleagues from the Jesuit School of Theology. Welcome to the Silicon Valley, once known as the Valley of Heart's Delight. In Silicon Valley, no matter where you go, there are three words you hear in conversations – innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship.

Having heard the Word of God, I wish to reflect with you on three other words -- a noun and two adjectives: university, Catholic, and Jesuit.

The Noun. This Mass of the Holy Spirit reminds us of the meaning of what we do as a university. We have assembled as students, staff, faculty, and friends of the academic community of Santa Clara University. Like all such institutions, here we study the vast scope of human experience: we read, discuss, research, debate, write, test, and create. We seek to know how our world works, what makes human beings tick, how to string together insights into discoveries. We want to make things work, whether we be engineers, lawyers, scientists, teachers, social scientists, accountants, dancers, and yes – even theologians.

We also desire to solve problems and improve life on our planet. We want to contribute to the solutions to the problems humanity faces: green house emissions and global warming; poverty and economic underdevelopment; autism and AIDs; unemployment and environmental ruin. To do this, we study on campus and off, in campus labs and in community-based locations; we learn from professors and from the poor. With motivated hearts, with powerful curiosity, we train our minds and use our intelligence to explore, to learn, to create solutions.

Our gathering in this church reminds us of more. Yes, we are a university, but we are a Catholic university. We do something in addition to the actions of most other institutions of higher learning, something we share only with other schools with a living religious heritage. This liturgy signals that, at Santa Clara, we contribute something distinct, valuable, and important for all humanity. Here we ask God's gift of the Spirit of Wisdom, the Counselor whom Jesus promised us in today's Gospel.

We remind ourselves that we have created a space where people can explore all things - all subjects, all questions (as a university does) - and also seek the transcendent dimension of these subjects (as a Catholic university does). We make room for discussions of God and the meaning of our work through consideration of God as Intellect, Truth, and Beauty. Creating knowledge is a holy activity.

The Jesuit School of Theology, now part of Santa Clara, helps us “be university.” This school, new to us, enables us better to seek answers to the deepest questions raised in our investigations. The presence of more theologians reminds us that there is a mystical component to the hard work of our study, testing, and thinking; a religious meaning to the

work of the intellect and the life of the student. We touch something HOLY when we strive for excellence, when we push towards the frontiers of knowledge, when we compete in athletics. Whatever our spiritual beliefs, the company of theologians challenges us to delve ever deeper into those things that we do as a university that is Catholic.

These rabble-rousing theologians stimulate us to ask again the first question most every one of us ever asked as children: Why? Why am I here? Why is the individual significant? Why is life important?

And there is a final word to add. We are a Jesuit Catholic University. We are animated by the insights of Ignatius Loyola and guided by the modern goals of the Society of Jesus. Many of these Jesuits, by the way, are rabble-rousing theologians who ask disturbing questions and push us to look at a world with glaring inequalities and suffering.

Ignatius of Loyola discovered insights that aid us further. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, [#236] Ignatius wrote that God “works and labors” for us in and through all creation. God attends to us through a world created for our benefit and enjoyment; through family and friends who love and support us. God has dreams for our happiness and our fulfillment. And God goes a step further. While working and laboring for each individual, God invites us to work alongside God, to share in this mighty enterprise of ongoing creation for the good of all.

As a Jesuit university, we believe God is at work through the pursuit of knowledge; through learning; through music, theater, and the arts; in athletics; and in our professional schools.

Let me conclude. I imagine God working in and through us – whether we are aware of God or not. God invites us into these acts of creation as a co-laborer in building up our world, serving the poor, and studying hard during our university experience. We create with God wherever we are involved in the university community. All of us contribute – faculty, students, and staff at all levels in all offices. We rely on the promise of Jesus that God’s Spirit will stir us to seek and recognize the deeper meaning of what we do, the holiness of our actions. We join God in this ongoing work of creation for the good of all people. May God bless us all as we work alongside God this year at Santa Clara University.