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## Dedication: Dean Joseph O'Meara

Notre Dame Law School Faculty

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## DEDICATION: DEAN JOSEPH O'MEARA

Our sentiments in this dedication would be sadder than they are if Joseph O'Meara were planning to leave our faculty, which he is not, but they are at least sober as we see him relinquish the leadership of the Law School after fifteen vibrant years.

He came to Notre Dame after a full career at the Ohio Bar — a career that brought him to eminence in the practice of law; in the organized Bar; and in service to local, state, and federal governments. He had been at the Bar thirty years, most of them as a partner in his own law firm and many of them as a part-time teacher at the University of Cincinnati School of Law.

He promised no comfort for his colleagues in the Law School, but at that time the promise might have been taken skeptically. It was reasonable to suppose that he had come here to graceful retirement, but he did not retire. He immediately turned everything upside down, and he has churned the institution and everyone in it for fifteen years. His last day in the Dean's office will undoubtedly be marked by a revolutionary directive that will bring students and faculty to their feet in protest.

He has driven his students and his alumni, setting their standards high, but no one works harder at anything than he works at education. It is from himself, more than from anyone else, that he has, in Churchill's phrase, found it necessary "to get the last scrap out of the human structure." He deserves rest even if we do not, but we are pleased that his rest will be only partial, that his voice and his spirit will continue to rescue us from comfort.

The state of the Law School after fifteen years is evidence of the value of Dean O'Meara's effort. Applications have more than quadrupled, and the quality of entering classes has improved immensely. The curriculum has become stronger, the course of study tougher, the standards higher. We have been able to open our doors to able young men who could not afford private legal education, and we have been able to do so because of Dean O'Meara's stubborn, dogged pursuit of scholarship funds, a pursuit that has seen our annual scholarship budget grow from literally nothing to well over one hundred thousand dollars.

He has opened doors for our graduates — the shiny doors of Wall Street and its look-alikes in the financial districts of other cities; the panelled doors of learned and respected judges; the busy doors of federal legal staffs. More important in the future of Notre Dame and of America, he has pointed out the less conspicuous doors of legal practice in smaller communities and of service to the poor and the disadvantaged. It is comment enough, perhaps, to note that as many of our students this year will go into neighborhood law offices and civil rights and civil liberties work as will go into large, prestigious law firms.

This excellent law review; our vigorous Moot Court and writing programs; our thorough system of training in advocacy; the leaders of the profession who support, advise, encourage, and even praise our efforts are all the watermarks of Joseph O'Meara's years here. And so is our position as a faculty within the University, a position that has become stronger, more independent, and — with no small personal gratitude to our Dean — more prosperous. If our life together has given few occasions to praise and thank him, it is because he is the incarna-

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tion of his own incessant challenge — “one cannot stand still; willy-nilly there is movement, movement up or down, forward or backward.” Perhaps his impatient, demanding leadership left too few opportunities for the gracious amenity of a more satisfied society.

He has continued, while here, to serve the community. Several times the President — three presidents as a matter of fact — called upon him to serve in important advisory posts, as have the Governor of Indiana, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, organized legal education, political leaders, and the leaders of the civil rights and civil liberties movements. Only as the pressures of his self-imposed regimen at the Law School grew heavier did he begin to withdraw from some of these commitments, and then only because his educational duties came first.

Several of us have labored with him during all of these years of change and progress. The majority of us have served with him during most of them. Two of us have learned from him in the classroom, and all of us have been his students. We have been his friends and colleagues, too, and he has been ours.

Joseph O'Meara is a sensitive and determined man. No one who has worked with him closely can have failed to admire his personal sacrifice and dedication; and anyone who knows him at all knows, despite his effort to hide the fact, of his personal acts of kindness and support. He manages, despite rigorous demands on himself and everyone around him, to treat students and colleagues as brother men.

We are reluctant to claim prestige for our Law School, but we welcome the estimation of Father Hesburgh and of two great American jurists, who are willing to claim it for us. We agree with them that the Notre Dame Law School owes its eminence to Joseph O'Meara more than to any other man who has served it.

*The Law Faculty of the University of Notre Dame*