

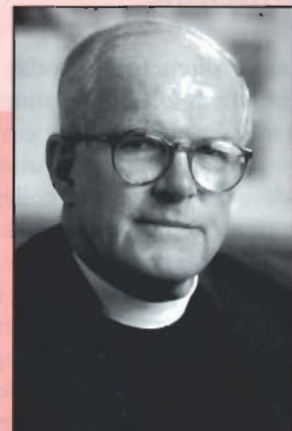
“The Jesuit Glass is always Half-Full”

Gerry Reedy, S.J., on Harold Ridley, S.J.

On January 18, this year, Harold “Hap” Ridley, S.J., former dean of LeMoyne College and president of Loyola College Baltimore, died suddenly in his residence at Loyola. His friend of many years, Gerry Reedy, S.J., former dean of Fordham, former president of Holy Cross, and now dean of Fordham’s Marymount campus, preached at both Hap’s funeral in Baltimore and at a memorial mass at Saint Ignatius Church in New York.

Much of both homilies dwelt on Hap’s love for his family and friends; but we publish a few paragraphs here both because of their impact on those who were present and for their relevance for all of us who are dedicated to Jesuit higher education.

RASsj



Harold Ridley, S.J.
1939-2005

A Catholic University is the place where the ideas and dreams of the secular, post-modern world encounter the ideas and dreams of our Church, which is the sacrament of God’s presence in our world. It is the characteristic of Jesuit schools, especially Jesuit universities such as Loyola College, to bless that encounter of secular and sacred: we see its possibilities rather than its dangers. The Jesuit glass is always half full. Sometimes courses study cultures that have disguised God’s presence; still Jesuits try to uncover the true and the good. We try to evangelize and to search out the traces that God has left of his all consuming love, and, of the bright fire of his Holy Spirit. Our Holy Father reminds us: though truth may seem fragmented, all is made in the image of Jesus Christ. It is in the Catholic university that unity will be restored.

Trusting in a redeemed and recreated world, teachers in our schools lead our students in great freedom to study biological, social, and technological systems; culture and literature; philosophy and theology. All of us believe these studies are good in themselves. Many of us understand our liberal studies in a deeper way. Through them we also satisfy our thirst for order, for how we should lead our lives and for signs that love, not loneliness, marks our pilgrimage to heaven.

At LeMoyne College from 1973 to 1994, and here at Loyola, Father Ridley revered this academic world. He believed in what Loyola was doing. Without anxiety he pondered the cultural journeys our students might take on their way to being educated. He trusted the balance of our students and teachers. He proudly

talked about new and old faculty who shared his vision. He was always searching for others who shared his vision of an authentic Loyola, bursting with Catholic life, and also with in-your-face accomplishment. He was full of light, but pretty salty too...

In Christian thought the symbol of the Word is seminal and omnipresent.

Jesus Christ is the image, or Word uttered by the Father. The whole world is God’s word, as Scripture is the Word of God. We are cautioned that our own words can both hurt and heal.

Hap was a word man. His degrees were in English literature. He loved telling stories – often editing them until perfect. He knew that we may not solve every problem – but a few gracious or witty words might help us over the gap.

Because Hap and I were friends for so many years, we had many things to talk about – family, friends, our jobs, books we had read.

Always after I left him, I remembered questions I forgot to ask, things I had forgotten to say. Hap had the same experience. Both of us would save our questions for the next time.

Many of us feel this way now. We want to say things to Hap that we did not remember to say – or were shy about saying. We are afraid that we will never say them, that there will be no next time.

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, I know in faith that our conversation with Hap Ridley will go on – through God’s mercy and through the power of his Son’s resurrection, we will be able to say all that is in our hearts now.