

As we drive up to the front of St. Mary's Seminary and University and look at the great entrance of the building we see the carving on the pediment of the sending forth of the apostles by Jesus after his resurrection. Above it is inscribed the command of Jesus "Go teach all nations."

Although St. Mary's was built in 1929, this choice of a key biblical text in a central location of the seminary prefigured the decree on the "Ministry and Life of Priests" from the Second Vatican Council in which the Council Fathers stated that the proclamation of the word of God is the first task of the priest. That proclamation takes place in many different ways and forms from preaching to teaching to deeds that reflect words and to a living in community that makes the church a living example of the word of God. The proclamation of the word also has its more formal aspects in the world of communication.

The same Council Fathers who spoke about the ministry of the priest spoke also about social communication in the decree *Inter mirifica* in December, 1963. The decree states:

"Man's genius has with God's help produced marvelous technical inventions from creation, especially in our times. The Church is particularly interested in those which touch man's spirit and which have opened up new avenues of easy communication if all kinds of news, of ideas and orientations. Chief among them are those means of communication which of their nature can reach and influence not merely single individuals but the very masses and even the whole of human society."

One of our alumni present here today has been involved in this world of communication of the Word of God in a professional manner for many years and has brought the message of Jesus and the teaching of the Church to countless people through his ministry in the world of communication.

Msgr. Owen Campion an alumnus of the class of 1966 was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on April 24, 1940. After receiving his early education in Nashville, he was graduated from St. Bernard College, in Cullman, Alabama, and then completed his theological training at St. Mary's Seminary. He was ordained a priest on May 21, 1966.

His career as a Catholic journalist began soon after ordination. From 1971 to 1988, he served as editor-in-chief of the Tennessee register, the State of Tennessee's Catholic newspaper. Since 1988, he has been associate publisher of our Sunday Visitor Publishing, Inc., in Huntington, Indiana, the largest publisher of Catholic periodicals and books in English in the world. Active for many years in the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada, he served for nine years as a member of its board of directors, and in 1984 the Association selected him as its 36th national president. For some years, he served as chair of the association's international committee.

In January 1989, the Holy See named him the ecclesiastical adviser for the International Catholic Union of the Press (UCIP), the official, worldwide organization of catholic publishers and journalists, and he served three terms, until 1998. In 1997, UCIP elected him an honorary member of the union for life.

He presently is president of the North American region of UCIP. He is a member of our Sunday Visitor's editorial board, the board of directors of the Tennessee register; the board of directors of Today's Catholic, the weekly newspaper of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend; the board of directors of the Catholic Journalism Scholarship Fund; and the board of governors of Aquinas College, in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Public Religious Council, an ecumenical group of religious journalists, presented him with its Hinkhouse -DeRose Award, in 1984. In 1989, the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada conferred on him its highest recognition, the St. Francis de Sales Award.

There is a particular aspect of Msgr. Campion's work in the field of communication that we wish to honor him for today. Among his many tasks in the world of publication has been his work as editor of *The Priest* magazine, a periodical which address important questions for the ministry and life of the priest today in an insightful, balanced and pastoral manner. In this year for priests we are conscious of the need for continuing formation for all priests, a ministry that St. Mary's has been involved with through its center for continuing formation for many years. In his apostolic exhortation "Pastores dabo vobis" the late Pope John Paul II drew particular attention to the necessity of ongoing formation and built his reflection in this area on St. Paul's advice to Timothy, "Rekindle the gift of God that is within you."

Msgr. Campion and *The Priest* magazine have worked hard to help each of us rekindle that gift in our lives.

It is for these reasons that his alma mater, St. Mary's Seminary and University awards Msgr. Owen Campion the Jean Jacques Olier Distinguished Alumnus medal.

Historical Note on Award:

Named after the 17th century founder of the Society of Sulpice the award is given to St. Mary's Seminary and University alumni who through extraordinary contribution to the church and community embody the mission of St. Mary's to form priests after the heart of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Previous recipients of this award include Cardinal Adam Maida, Msgr. Scotty MacDonald, Msgr. Charles Kelly of Richmond, Msgr. James Cronin of Baltimore and Sulpician Fathers Howard Bleichner, Lawrence Terrien, Michael Barré and John Kselman