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Benefactors Dinner

22 February 2008

I would like to take a moment, as I begin, to acknowledge our student musicians who have performed for us this evening. They are students in our College of Music and Fine Arts and I want to thank them for being with us this evening.

At its root meaning, the word benefactor means to make or create the good. Our celebration this evening recognizes you, our benefactors, for your partnership in the work of Loyola University as you help us to create good in the world. Your support enables Loyola to attract faculty members and students who can make a positive difference in the world. Your support and your gifts reach far beyond Loyola. Your support strengthens Loyola's ability to engage the world and make it better. And, I think there has never been, in the history of the university, a more important and critical time for Loyola to be part of New Orleans and the Gulf South.

So it is fitting that we should take time to recognize your generosity and your place as our coworkers. In one of Ignatius Loyola's experiences of God, Ignatius was walking down a riverbank near the small Spanish town of Manresa. During that walk, Ignatius was given a vision of God's loving presence in the world. Ignatius realized that everything around him—the

ordinary river, the town, the wind on his cheek, and everything in the whole world, in fact—was a gift from God. Ignatius wished to respond to God's gifts with gratitude, prayer, and service.

Cicero said well what Ignatius understood and experienced: Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but also the parent of all others. Tonight we renew our fundamental identity as a Jesuit university by acknowledging your gifts, your support, and by saying thank you. And we take a moment to give you, in some broad sense, our stewardship of your gifts and support.

In the fiscal year 2007, our benefactors gave Loyola almost ten million dollars. The heart of Jesuit education is to challenge students' minds and imagination so that they might live better and make the world a better place. Your partnership helps us to hire and maintain excellent faculty members who can engage in educating our students as whole persons. Your support enables Loyola's students and faculty to wrestle with life's complex questions: questions of faith (including the faith of others), questions of reason—the sciences and the humanities, questions of beauty in music and the arts.

How have we used the gifts you have entrusted to us? The heart of any university is its students and faculty. And your gifts are crucial to our ability to recruit and retain them. Tonight with us are a few distinguished faculty who have benefited from your generosity. Thanks to the establishment of endowed chairs, because of gifts from benefactors, we all enjoy the work of these scholars. I ask the following professors to rise and be recognized together: Dr. Paul Barnes, Rev. John H. Mullahy, S.J. Eminent Chair in Biology; Dr. Robert Thomas, Loyola Chair in

Environmental Communications; and Dr. Robert Verchick, Wendell H. Gauthier – Michael X. St. Martin Eminent Scholar Chair in Environmental Law.

We are also joined by a number of students this evening. With us are student leaders and volunteers who have been deeply involved in the renewal of the university and the city. We also have representatives of different parts of the community who have collaborated with us in the work of renewing New Orleans.

According to studies done by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, the percentage of first-generation college students is 16 percent nationally. At Loyola, 30 percent of our undergraduates are the first member so their families to go to college. I am very proud of this aspect of our work at Loyola. Educating a student who is the first in her or his family to go to college not only changes the life of the student, it changes the future of a family. Also, more than fifty-three percent of our students are on need-based aid. Without the aid and support that comes from our benefactors and scholarships, these opportunities would not be as accessible for many of our students.

It has always been the case that in Jesuit education, knowledge is not simply an end in itself but a means by which one can give glory to God and work for the well-being of all men and women. Post-Katrina New Orleans and the Gulf South are a laboratory for Jesuit education. Let me give you a few examples that involve the renewal of the city:

- The College of Business continues to be involved in the reorganization of the District Attorney's office.
- The College of Business is also involved with the city's Economics Development Office to place student interns. In 2007, our Small Business Development Center counselled 2289 local businesses (71 percent existing businesses; 29 percent start-ups).
- The College of Humanities and Natural Sciences is coordinating a writing institute; and is working with the city on investigating Chagas disease.
- The College of Music and Fine Arts continues to assist the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra and the New Orleans Opera by providing space for rehearsals and performances as well as hosting exhibits.
- The College of Law continues its participation in rebuilding the city's justice system, assisting the Road Home Program, and serving citizens through the Law Clinic. The college is also involved in the dispute mediation center as part of the region's recovery.
- In the College of Social Sciences, students in the Donnelly Center for Nonprofit Communications have assisted a host of neighborhood associations and other nonprofits that are attempting to revitalize the city. Our nursing faculty has been involved with the Health Care Access Network—a group of nurses assessing post-Katrina health needs in the Hispanic community.
- Loyola University continues to sponsor and support the Common Good Initiative led by

Professor Mike Cowan. The initiative has brought together the nonprofit sector of the city so that that sector will have a voice in the renewal of the city.

- Loyola has partnered with the Fox Leadership Program from the University of Pennsylvania to provide internships and opportunities in New Orleans and the Gulf coast. In addition to bringing 200 students from the University of Pennsylvania here during their spring break, the program will bring graduate and undergraduate interns here for the summer and they will live at Loyola.
- Loyola has served as a home for the city's new Ethics Review Board and Office of the Inspector General. I am very grateful to members of the university staff who have supported these efforts and proud that we have been a part of them.
- Loyola has established, with the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Social Research Institute. The Jesuit Social Research Institute (JSRI) applies principles of Catholic social thought to urgent social issues affecting our region such as migration, poverty, and racism. The Institute aims at realizing tangible results contributing to the solution of problems that we face in our society.

You should take pride in these, and many other examples of Loyola's engagement in the renewal of New Orleans. This is not just our work. It is your work. Your support makes these efforts possible in your partnership with us.

Our benefactors are not nameless or faceless. Tonight we honor Tom and Kitty Kloor for their support and leadership as friends of Loyola. Tom and Kitty have done almost every kind of

volunteer work that one can do at Loyola. To this day, one will see Tom leading an annual fund committee meeting, or making recruiting calls to prospective students. We are also grateful to the people of Qatar who established the Qatar Katrina Fund to assist people affected by Katrina. That fund has helped Loyola students, from the areas affected by Katrina, continue their education.

On an evening when we honor people who care deeply about Loyola, I must mention two men whose company we cannot enjoy tonight. I am very happy that the Duplantier and Gisevius families are here with us tonight. Judge Adrian Duplantier cared deeply enough about Loyola's students and our Jesuit tradition to give tirelessly of his time and resources so that young men and women always receive a Loyola education, regardless of their economic background. Adrian was deeply committed to the goals of Jesuit education and worked to make them available to people at every stage of their lives. His involvement with Boys Hope Girls Hope, Jesuit High School, and Loyola are examples of that commitment. Fred Gisevius was an attorney's attorney. His passion for Loyola and the law were apparent throughout his good and long life. Hundreds of Loyola students enjoyed his counsel as a teacher and advisor, and his vision and generosity have ensured that every future graduate of Loyola's College of Law will have been touched by his life.

Earlier I mentioned that Loyola has established, with the New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Social Research Institute. I am happy to announce this evening that Mr. Tom Benson, a long time friend and benefactor of the university, and his wife Gayle, have given a gift of two million dollars, in the name of their friend, Father Jim Carter, S.J., Loyola's

President Emeritus. The gift will be used towards the endowment of the Social Research Institute. We are deeply grateful for this gift. It will have a lasting and profound impact enabling the university to help transform the region.

We face real and difficult challenges in the renewal of New Orleans, the region, and the university. However, we face real opportunities as well. We have the chance, rarely given, to renew the city and the region. We ought not to seek to rebuild it. That goal is not worthy of our efforts, for there is much of what the city was before Katrina, that ought not to be rebuilt. Rather we seek to renew it. We seek to build on the strengths, culture, and diversity and build a more humane city where all men and women can flourish. We can dream boldly about the university and the city because of your support and generosity. Our thanks to you are not only some words, or a dinner. Our thanks will be the work of Loyola that will help make the dreams for a new New Orleans a reality.

We are challenged to dream boldly about what can be, and challenged to act and make our dreams reality. Senator Robert F. Kennedy often quoted George Bernard Shaw who wrote: "Some men see things as they are and ask, 'why?' I dream things that never were and ask, 'why not?'" Now, my friends, is the time for us to dream about the university, the city, and the region and ask "Why not?". Our true thanks to you will be in our work to build a more humane city and a stronger university.