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Memorial Dedication—Reverend Richard A. Vachon, S.J.

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DEDICATION

Reverend Richard A. Vachon, S.J., devoted the latter nineteen years of his life to Loyola Law School. During these years he served the school as a professor, administrator, and friend to faculty and students. Father Vachon worked tirelessly for the greater success of Loyola and its students, and we are deeply indebted to him for his efforts. In his memory we have assembled these personal remembrances of some of those who knew him well.

The Board of Editors of the Loyola Law Review is honored to dedicate this issue to the memory of Reverend Richard A. Vachon.

The Board of Editors

*Charles S. Casassa**

The priesthood of a Jesuit is no different in its essence from the priesthood of any other Catholic priest, religious or diocesan. However, there is often a difference in the way that priesthood is worked out. Dick Vachon as a Jesuit priest worked out his priesthood within the framework of the Jesuit order. I would be remiss if I did not say that Dick was always conscious of his priesthood, that he was proud of it, and that he used it to help many people, often in quite unknown ways. Dick was equally proud of being a Jesuit.

I imagine that a public opinion poll on what a Jesuit is would produce some startling responses. History has already recorded some very contradictory answers. Some view us with cynicism and suspicion, as witness the word "Jesuitical"; others think the Jesuits are the nearest ones to walk on water since Jesus Christ did. Both views are at least somewhat exaggerated. When Ignatius Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, he wanted it to be a body of men whom the vicar of Christ and the church could call on for any task they wanted accomplished. Ignatius wanted his men to be ready to move to any place, at any time, to do any task that was asked of them. He wanted his men to fit in with any culture they happened to be working in. There was a dual reason for this. If his men did not understand the culture of the place in which they were working, they could have little hope of influencing that culture. By the same token, if they did not understand the culture, there was little chance that the culture could influence the type of ministry they should try to exercise.

A few great examples of true inculturation were Ricci and Schall in China and De Nobili in India. That same kind of concern for inculturation goes on today. Otherwise, Jesuits would be working in a vacuum. I had the privilege of attending the thirty-second general congregation of the Society of Jesus in Rome in 1975. There were more than 250 delegates present from all over the world. I was impressed by the wide variety of cultures in which these men and their brethren back home exercised their apostolic ministries, and by the broad range of these apostolic ministries.

Anyone who says all Jesuits are cast in the same mold should open his eyes and look around. One ministry, however, that is common all over the world is education, but that ministry is exercised in a thousand and one different ways, depending largely on the local situation and

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culture. American Jesuit education is far from being the same as Filipino or African Jesuit education, at least in method and context.

As an American Jesuit educator in a law school, Father Vachon exercised his ministry in an American culture, and more specifically, in a Southern California culture. That was something I admired about him. He was aware of the kind of culture in which he was working. He was conscious of the double task of adapting to that culture and at the same time of trying to influence it in a Christian way.

So Vachon was a priest, a Jesuit priest, a Jesuit priest-educator. He was the kind of Jesuit Ignatius would be proud of. He was the kind of Jesuit we are all richer for having known.

Dick could and did say with Martha in today's Gospel: "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God: He who is to come into the world." And he can say with Isaiah in the first reading: "On that day it will be said: 'Behold our God to whom we looked to save us. This is the Lord for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that He has saved us.'"

He has found the Lord. In the midst of our sorrow let us rejoice and be glad with him. That, I think, is what he wants of us now.

*Lloyd Tevis**

Last June, acting on behalf of the faculty, I found myself delivering a tribute to Father Vachon at his funeral. It seemed unreal that things had worked out this way. For whenever I had given thought to my own death, I had pictured Father Vachon as the celebrant at my requiem mass. The comfort I drew from that imagined scenario and the comfort I drew daily from his friendship were gone. The Church teaches that death is not an end but rather a beginning. Thus, I did not mourn for him but for myself and his myriad friends.

Death causes us to remember, and I have been remembering the nineteen years of association with this fine man. It is my hope that these few scattered recollections will strike a responsive chord in those who loved him.

It was in the spring of 1962 when we first met. He was then completing his work at Columbia University for his J.S.D. degree. The Jesuit Provincial had assigned Father Vachon to teach at Loyola Law School, but Dean Dibble insisted that there must first be an interview

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with the faculty to be sure that he was acceptable. So Father Vachon flew out from New York for the interview. He was, of course, very acceptable and joined the faculty that year. He never tired of telling about this experience because he was proud that the Dean would not accept a Jesuit on the faculty merely because the Provincial had sent him there. That experience was the beginning of his love affair with the Law School, which lasted until his death.

Unfortunately, one cannot often count on the loyalty of others, but with Father Vachon there was never any question. It extended to the Law School, its administrators and faculty, the students, his friends, and his brother Jesuits. When I was Dean, and before that as Associate Dean, I had the benefit of his steadfast support in a hundred ways. When I found it necessary to resign as Dean for reasons of health, his loyalty asserted itself. He took on the thankless job of Interim Dean while we awaited our new Dean, whose commitment to another school had a year to run.

It was easy to take advantage of his friendship because he was so willing to give of himself. No matter how busy he was, or how pressed for time, if I had something I wanted to talk over with him, he would make time for me. Others had much the same experience. He would make himself available to others under circumstances where most of us would excuse ourselves for want of time.

After Father Vachon had settled into the routine at Loyola, he began to feel that he was lacking because he had never practiced law. We talked it over, and he then went about getting his feet wet in the practice. He approached everything with enthusiasm, and this was no exception.

Practicing law was the occasion for him to acquire a non-clerical wardrobe. Ever after he was to be seen attired like his lay colleagues. In fact, it became an occasion for comment when he showed up with a Roman collar.

Over the years I learned that Father Vachon's interests were Catholic with both capital and small "c." He was a careful reader of the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and a variety of other papers and magazines. He was a sports fan, and not surprisingly, sports figures would turn up in his examinations. He was more than casually interested in politics and government. He was deeply involved in the joys and sorrows of his friends and students. It was at Mass that his most important interests and concerns would find their expression when, at the Prayer of the Faithful, he would mention his Mass intention or ask for prayers. He would ask for prayers for the

success of school projects, for members of the faculty and student body, his Jesuit brothers, alumni, the dead, the ill, and the unfortunates of this world. A recurring theme in his Mass intentions was peace.

Father Vachon's last year on earth was a sad one for him because of the long illness and ultimate death of his beloved friend and brother Jesuit, Father Willis Egan. It was inspiring to observe the way that Father Vachon's faith enabled him to come to terms with his grief.

Father Vachon's death has left an unfilled void in my life and that of many others. Yet we can be happy that he came our way to enrich our lives.

*Carol A. Schneiderman**

Many of us knew Father Vachon as professor, dean, priest, and scholar, but some of us were privileged to know the Good Father on a deeper, personal level. Behind that strong, demanding, intimidating exterior was a gentle, sensitive, compassionate man who gave to each of us unselfishly. In fact, no one shall ever know the scope of his good deeds, for his satisfaction came from the good that he achieved, rather than any public recognition. Father never asked for nor expected anything in return, for his was a labor of love.

My first insight into Father Vachon's sensitivity and devotion to his students occurred during my first year of law school. A classmate had taken me to see the Loyola Law School Chapel. Since I had never experienced a Mass before, we made plans to attend one together. By coincidence, the day that we selected to attend Mass was the day that our torts professor, Father Vachon, returned to us our first graded law school exam. Pleased with our results, my friend and I rushed upstairs to the Chapel. As we stood waiting for the Mass to commence, the door to the small Chapel opened, revealing Father Vachon. We had not expected him to celebrate the Mass, and were somewhat intimidated by the prospect. However, it was during this Mass that we realized the truly special character of Father Vachon. For after Father had read the word of God, he spoke to us. The essence of his sermon was that he had just returned to his students their first exams in law school, and he prayed that those students who had performed well would not become arrogant, and that those students who had performed poorly would not become discouraged.

* *Member of the California Bar.*

On another occasion, Father Vachon openly displayed his sensitivity and devotion to his students. This time, however, his forum was the classroom. Father Vachon, at our last session for the year, shared with our class some of his innermost feelings. I do not recall all of what he said, or the precise words which he employed, but the essence of his message was that our class had restored his faith in himself as a teacher. He conveyed to us how much he enjoyed teaching, how hard he strove to be an excellent teacher, and most important, how much our success meant to him personally. However, the one thing about that special day that still remains vividly in my mind, and in the minds and hearts of my classmates, was the impact Father Vachon's words had upon each and every one of us. Father Vachon's sensitivity, warmth, and love had touched us all, and his loveliness of heart lives and breathes within us forever. For Father Vachon was more to us than a law professor; he was a professor of life.

*Walter Jitner**

I first met Father Vachon when he was the Acting Dean and I was a night student. His reputation was that of a terror, but his reactions were to the contrary when I continually pestered him with numerous projects. I found that he was a warm, sensitive man with a unique sense of humor who backed you to the fullest.

Out of this relationship grew a friendship, and my family and I soon found that when you had "Vash" for a friend, you had a real friend. He gave freely of his love and loyalty and asked only that you love him in return. He adored having a fuss made over him and was not ashamed to show it. The esteem in which we held him increased as his great humanism was more and more revealed to us.

The years passed, and our friendship grew until he was not only a dear friend, but truly a member of the family. We were privileged in that we were able to share so much with him. He brought fun, ideas, spirituality, and wit into our home, and he and his illustrious side-kick, Father Willis Egan, brought glamor, excitement, and devotion into our lives. Our children were most fortunate in the fact that "Vash" had such a great influence on them, and no matter where he was, or how busy, he found time to think of the children.

But now a real sorrow permeates our days. There is a void—an

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emptiness in our lives, and the sadness of his untimely death does not diminish, it only intensifies. We had twelve wonderful years with him, for which we sincerely thank God, and which we shall cherish.

