

My dear Brothers and Sisters. In today's Gospel Jesus is speaking to us strongly and clearly saying: "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant." In these words of Jesus it is affirmed to us that the only legitimate use of power is service, and considering the examples of his life, we find that it is loving and caring service. Consider the story of Barthimeus, the blind man. Jesus did not just heal him, but first asked him: "What do you want me to do for you?" And when the blind man said "I want to see" Jesus healed him. He washed the disciples feet as an act of loving service. And most of all, He gave his life as a ransom for all of us. It is very, very clear that to follow Jesus means to be a loving and caring servant in God's Kingdom, and that is the greatest honor there is.

My dear Sisters and Brothers. On the Le Moyne campus there are banners on the lamp posts saying: SPIRIT, INQUIRY, LEADERSHIP, JESUIT. I wondered how to interpret all this. Well, Spirit surely means the Holy Spirit. Inquiry is our search for the Truth. Leadership then, following Jesus teaching, must mean loving and caring Service. And Jesuit, I said to myself, hopefully it means all of the above. I do not know how these words are interpreted by the great diversity of people walking by and looking at these banners, but for myself, I am satisfied with the interpretation that Spirit, Inquiry, Leadership mean: HOLY SPIRIT, TRUTH, and SERVICE.

The only legitimate use of power is loving and caring service. To show what this means, I would like to present you an example from the field I am most familiar with: Biology, the Science of Life. It is about Charles Darwin. As a young boy, he was not a good student. He sort of managed to get through high school, and then the family's big question was: What shall we do with Charles? His father, Robert Darwin was a successful country doctor, and, of course, he wanted Charles to follow in his footsteps and become a physician. So he enrolled Charles in the medical school in Edinburgh. That lasted hardly more than a year. On one occasion the medical students were present at a surgery. It was about a young boy whose leg was heavily infected, and the only way to save his life was amputation. In the middle of the 19th century there were no other alternatives available. At the sight of blood and at the screaming of the child, Charles ran from the operating room, and from medical school. He wrote a letter to his father: "Dear Father, I am sorry to disappoint you ...". So the family sat down to discuss what they should do with Charles. According to the social standing of the family, if not an MD, then Charles should become either a lawyer or a clergyman. They did not have much trust in the law business, so they enrolled Charles in the School of Divinity at Cambridge. It is strange that nobody ever asked him what he wanted to do with his life. Nonetheless, Charles finished his studies in the School of Divinity and was about to become the pastor in a parish somewhere in the country, when he heard about an opening for being the unpaid naturalist on a trip around the world on the ship called the Beagle with Fitzroy as the captain. He applied and got the position. Finally he could do something he always wanted to do and was deeply interested in: to see and understand life on earth. He wrote another letter to his father saying: "Dear Father, I am sorry to disappoint you once again ...".

My dear Sisters and Brothers, in contrast to this example I would like to read to you a few sentences from the Dutch Catechism on education to love: "Education is service" - says the catechism. "To treat children as unimportant is to be self-seeking. To regard children as things which can be turned into copies of one's own person and desires, is also self-seeking. Each child has something special and unique about it. It is a new human being, not a repetition of ourselves. The parents should serve this new life, to set it free to be itself."

My Brothers and Sisters, education is loving and caring service, as it takes the form of giving directions how to love God and neighbor. And that is only a beginning. Let us never forget the words of Jesus: "Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the servant of all." Indeed, the only good use of power is loving and caring service. Amen.