

**Dr. Joseph E. Nyre, President of Seton Hall University,
Delivers 18th Annual Borromeo Lecture at St. Charles Preparatory School
October 28, 2019; The Robert C. Walter Student Commons**

Dr. Joseph E. Nyre, President of Seton Hall University, delivered the 2019 Borromeo Lecture in the school's Robert C. Walter Student Commons on Tuesday, October 28th. The speaker series, in its 18th year, has established a forum at St. Charles to annually attract to campus a speaker of national renown on the topics of morals and ethics in society, business and government.

Dr. Nyre made his remarks at a noon luncheon in front of more than 800 people, including members of the student body, faculty and administration, as well as more than 100 guest representing leaders in the business, education, non-profit, political and Church communities around Central Ohio.

He addressed his comments primarily to the students, based on the theme of encouraging them to become 'outliers.'

Dr. Nyre began his presentation by telling the young men in the audience that from his position as the president of a college university, "it is clear to me that the world is run by the people who 'show up.' So when you arrive at your colleges and universities we need you to show up and engage. How you engage will be an equal or greater determinant for your ability to persuade others and to lead."

He said as college students they will be defined on how they show up how then become engaged. He offered them this advice: when they arrive on campus, they should choose their friends wisely and avoid being grouped into a statistic. Be the 'outlier' -- someone who stands out from the norm and can't be grouped easily.

"As a psychologist, as a researcher and a university president, I look for outliers. Do not become, by default, a member of some readily identifiable group or generation. Don't let yourself be pigeon-holed...and don't pigeon-hole yourself. Be the outlier."

No matter what college they attend, he said, they are bound to find "self-righteous groups that will define their principles and those of the people who disagree with them as black/white, as absolutely right or absolutely wrong. In the real world however, things are rarely so stark. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, it is actually possible that both sides of an argument to make sense," he said. The challenge can be deciding which of two is the better one.

Dr. Nyre noted the loud political climate we find ourselves in today. He noted that social and political progress in America's history has most often come, not when one side has completely defeated the other, "but when opposing sides finally balance a point between them." In effect both sides coming to the understanding that "the other guy has a good point too."

“So by asking you to be an outlier, I’m asking you to bring excellence to the college dialogue,” Nyre encouraged. “Join the debates, but do so without resorting to ‘identity politics.’ Look for the balance of points. When others refuse to listen, the outlier leans in close and hears what others have to say. When people disagree, the outlier is the one who stands up to their principles without being overly disagreeable. The one who leads by example.”

“We struggle with this ability to disagree without being disagreeable,” he said. “We struggle with this trait at the dinner table, in the classroom, in the Quad, in the halls of Congress and the international stage. When people become disenchanted and disengaged, the outlier shows them what ‘caring’ is and how leadership works.”

Noting that President John F. Kennedy fondness for saying, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going,” Nyre told the guests that he dared to recast JFK’s thought in this way: “When the going gets tough, some people turn up their noses and judge, while others roll up their sleeves and lead. Those are the traits that define what it means to be an outlier.”

He said that most college and universities welcome open debate and the fair exchange of ideas and viewpoints, but at the same time, “we want those dialogues kept within limits. To remain reasonably civil.”

Nyre said he didn’t believe colleges and universities can require civility.

While he feels that it is important to have a set of rules that makes it clear what forms of conduct are acceptable and non-acceptable, “attempts to induce civil behavior are misguided and impractical. Civility on a college campus cannot be imposed from the top down. It must come from the bottom up. From the grassroots. From the students themselves,” Nyre said.

He then asked, rhetorically: How can college students govern their conduct with grace and civility when so much of the world around them seems to have broken down into angry denunciations and personal insults? How is it possible to maintain a sense of decorum when the *modus operandi* for so many public figures today is to vilify anyone who says something they dislike?

After sharing examples of past national debates that turned violent and deadly, one such being that over civil rights, he offered that what the United States is presently going through is NOT the end of a civil American society.

“Distressing as it may be, it is part of the historical process that is the inevitable consequence of a fully-fledged democracy where free speech is legitimized, not repressed,” he said.

He then offered three important points for all to dwell upon:

First: “The times in which we live are *not the worst of times. These are our times.* Let us recognize that the divisiveness we see around us is not unique in history. In fact, the seemingly irreconcilable differences have been a reoccurring part of the American story since the birth of our nation. We need to keep this historical perspective uppermost in our minds when charges

and counter-charges are flying and when deeply disturbing phrases, such as ‘constitutional crisis,’ seem to be on every commentator’s lips.”

“Our nation has been having a conversation with itself for more than two and half centuries,” he said. “And keeping that conversation going, through good times and bad, is our best insurance policy for the centuries ahead. These are not the ‘worst’ of times, these are ‘*our*’ times.”

Secondly, Nyre offered to paraphrase some of the most relevant reflections of theologian Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, who taught Holy Scripture and Oxford University: “When faced with Fundamentalism, teach people to think. All questions should be permitted, all disciplines held. The intersection of faith and education undergirds our democracy.”

And third: Nyre stated that one person *CAN* make a difference.

A study of history reveals many stories of those individuals who were outliers in their time, Nyre said. “They changed the course of history because of their willingness to stand up and stand apart from others.”

He noted that President Kennedy devoted his prize-winning book, “*Profiles in Courage*,” to American public figures who had done just that. “In a democracy, every citizen, regardless of his interest in politics, hold office. Every one of us is in a position of responsibility. And in the final analysis, the kind of government we get depends upon how we fulfill those responsibilities,” Kennedy wrote.

Nyre then provided examples of those outside the political world who have been outliers, showing great personal courage in doing so. One of those was the 15 year-old Pakistani girl, Malala Yousafzai, who has fought so bravely for the rights of girls to be educated in her homeland. Because of her outspokenness, she was targeted by the Taliban. She survived being shot and was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

(Yousafzai) had known precisely the risk she ran by speaking out for female education. She had been warned by the Taliban that they would kill her if she failed to keep quiet. And her reply? “I decided I wasn’t going to cower in fear of their wrath.”

“I hope and pray none of you has to face such danger to be an outlier,” Dr. Nyre told the students. “Sometimes moral bravery can be just as demanding as physical bravery.”

He again cited Kennedy’s words: “Without belittling the courage with which men have died, we should not forget those acts of courage with which men have lived.”

Dr. Nyre then came back to the main theme with which he began his presentation: “These are not the *worst* of times, but these are *our* times. As students, I challenge you to avoid being grouped into a statistic. Be an outlier. Listen. Disagree. When you must, debate. But do so without engaging in identity politics. Teach civility by your needs.”

In conclusion, he told the group that the world needs skilled decision makers. “It is not enough to want to change the world. You must have the will to show up and try. And we need you. Knowledge is knowing what to do, and virtue is having the will to do it,” he said.

“May St. Charles continue to teach both and may you demonstrate your wisdom in your virtue. May God bless you. May God bless St. Charles. And may God bless the United States of America.”

Background on the event and its Benefactors

The Borromeo Lecture series was launched in 2000 through the initiative and support of 1961 St. Charles alumnus, Robert L. Dilenschneider, and his wife, Jan.

Bob is an internationally-known advisor and author who works and lives in New York City. He is the founder and principal of The Dilenschneider Group, a strategic counseling and communications consulting firm. Jan is an award-winning international expressionist artist who sponsors a The Janet Hennessey Dilenschneider Scholar Rescue Award in the Arts, which provides life-saving fellowships that have rescued artists and art scholars and their families from repressive regimes around the world.

Some of this series’ previous speakers have included theologian and former U.S. Ambassador Michael Novak; Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., author and lecturer; Joel Klein, former Chancellor of New York City Schools; Father John Jenkins, C.S.C., President of the University of Notre Dame; Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus; William McGurn, Vice President at News Corporation; Steve Forbes Jr., Chairman of Forbes Media; Kenneth L. Woodward, responsible for *Newsweek’s* Religion section (1964-2002); and most recently, Mr. Gerard Baker, Editor-at-Large for *The Wall Street Journal*.

The featured presenter, Joseph E. Nyre, Ph.D., is a first-generation college graduate who attained three advanced degrees. He completed pre- and post-doctoral studies at the University of Missouri, University of Kansas and Harvard Medical School. Widely respected for his program of research, state and national policy work, and leadership, Dr. Nyre joined Iona College as president in 2011. He was appointed president at another Roman Catholic institution, Seton Hall University, in August. He has practiced as a psychologist in academic, clinical and private practice settings while serving at several prominent institutions, including Baylor University, the University of Illinois-Chicago College of Medicine and Harvard Medical School. He has served on numerous boards, including the New York Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, International University of Catalonia, and Lower Hudson Valley Consortium of Catholic Colleges and Universities. A devout Catholic, Dr. Nyre and his wife, the former Kelli McIntyre, have four children and currently live in New Rochelle, New York.

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