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A Tribute to Brother Louis J. Faerber, S.M., on the Occasion of His Departure from the University of Dayton to Assume the Post of Educational Supervisor of the New York Province of the Society Of Mary

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A TRIBUTE
TO
BROTHER LOUIS J. FAERBER, S.M.

ON THE OCCASION OF
HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON
TO ASSUME THE POST OF
EDUCATIONAL SUPERVISOR OF THE NEW YORK PROVINCE
OF THE SOCIETY OF MARY

by Joseph J. Panzer, S.M.

In analyzing the full, rich, varied career of a successful person, is it possible to point the finger unerringly at his greatest single achievement? In the case of the man whom we are honoring tonight, it is not at all improbable that history will one day indicate that the comprehensive Self-Survey of the University which he inspired and directed in 1956-57 was his finest accomplishment. For on the strengths and weaknesses revealed by that searching appraisal, and on the sound recommendations that followed, the University has based the planning and decision-making that have made it the greater, the more mature, the more self-assured institution that it is today.

Tonight the University has the unusual opportunity to reverse the roles enacted in the Self-Survey and to evaluate its most prominent evaluator. The resulting profile, to be sure, will be nowhere near the size of the monumental three-volume report which still stands as evidence of the thoroughness of the first project — although a by no means insignificant volume could be written about its director. “We are looking in a mirror to see the future,” wrote Brother Faerber in 1957 when describing the ultimate purpose of the Self-Survey. Tonight we will have to be satisfied with just a few fleeting glimpses into the past.

That past begins in 1909, when Louis Joseph Faerber was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Eighteen years later he became a professed member of the Society of Mary and began his baccalaureate studies at the University of Dayton. He taught English at the Cathedral Latin School in Cleveland before being transferred to Cham-inade High School, Mineola, Long Island, where he served successively as Head of the Department of English, as Vice-Principal, and as Principal. Under his capable guidance the school earned an enviable reputation which still endures and which makes it one of the outstanding institutions in the Province whose total educational program he is now called on to direct. In 1945 he enrolled in the Graduate School of the Catholic University of America and three years later, having earned a doctor’s degree in Education, he was assigned to the University of Dayton.

Brother Louis was appointed Dean of Education in September, 1951. Apparently it was an unheralded event, judging by the scant notice accorded to it in the campus publications of that time; but in retrospect it must be said that it marked the dawning of a new era. The following simple comparisons illustrate dramatically the remarkable developments that have occurred during the past fourteen years under Brother Louis’ dynamic leadership:

In 1951, Education was a division of the College of Arts and Sciences, scarcely larger than a respectable academic department;

Today, Education is an autonomous School of the University, comprising 5 academic departments and offering 13 undergraduate and 4 graduate programs.

In 1951, the Division of Education had a staff of 14 instructors, 9 of whom were teaching on a full-time basis;

Today, the School of Education has a faculty of 52 instructors, half of whom are teaching on a full-time basis.

In 1951, the Division of Education enrolled 332 full-time and less than 300 part-time students; the summer enrollment in 1951 was 187 students.

Today, the School of Education has an enrollment of 1,200 full-time and 708 part-time students; the summer enrollment in 1964 was 1,757 students, 497 of whom were doing graduate work.

It is true, of course, that the University itself has come a long way since 1951 and that some of this growth and development is the inevitable result of the University's ambitious program of expansion; but it is equally true that much of this development is directly attributable to Brother Louis' imaginative planning and energetic promotion.

It is a relatively easy task to gather and present cold facts and statistics, as we have just done. These are tangible things that can be readily grasped and held in focus before the mind's eye. To get hold of the intangibles, the elusive ingredients of the formula that accounts for success, is quite another thing. This is particularly true in the present instance when we are presuming to evaluate the achievement of a man, who for fourteen busy and crowded years devoted to a work near and dear to his heart all his energy and all the gifts and talents with which he is so generously endowed. We are acutely aware, therefore, that we run the risk of oversimplification when we venture to single out the factors that best account for his success.

The first of these factors may be summed up in the term "professional competence." To say that for more than a dozen years Brother Louis has been "Mr. Education" on campus is no exaggeration. He has been the logical resource person to whom administration, faculty, and students have confidently turned for information on educational trends, for judgment on educational issues, for solutions to educational problems. He has been the recognized champion of professional education in a contemporary climate that has not always been understanding or friendly. Above all, he has exemplified to his staff and to his students the ideal professional educator — proud of his calling, jealous of its privileges, sensitive to its responsibilities. Blessed with a retentive memory, he has amassed a vast fund of knowledge relating to all aspects of education through wide and varied reading and alert attendance at innumerable conventions, conferences, and workshops. Those of us who have served with him on councils, committees, and oral comprehensive boards have had occasion more than once to marvel at the breadth and depth of his knowledge.

The second ingredient in Brother Louis' formula for success was hard work. It is literally true that he practically lived in his office. In his daily routine, which invariably extended into the night and over the week-ends, he maintained a dogged, relentless pace that always elicited admiration but rarely imitation. There were times when those of us who worked closely with him felt that he was driving too hard, that he was too exacting, too demanding. But that was only because he expected so much of himself that he found it difficult to understand why others should not be willing to give just as generously and just as cheerfully the last full measure of devotedness. Because he was so thorough in everything that he did and gave such

painstaking attention to the most minute details, one might suspect that he had little time left for creative planning. The fact is that, paradoxically enough, it was when he seemed most hopelessly bogged down in his routine work that he suddenly came up with some new idea, some new development, some new project that usually was fully matured in his mind and worked out in considerable detail.

A third factor contributing to Brother Louis' success was the warm, personal interest that he took in each and every member of his staff, in each and every student with whom he came into contact. He had a standing rule that all members of the staff were to be admitted to his office without formality and regardless of the pressure of his own work. His appointment book was always crowded with scheduled interviews with students. Despite the large number of persons whom he counseled, rarely did he fail to recognize a name or a face or to recall details of personal history and the subject of previous interviews. His is the rare gift of being able to listen patiently and sympathetically and to convey a feeling of deep concern for each person's problems. And he possesses a still rarer gift — the ability to say no, to deny an exception, to refuse a permission and yet to send the petitioner away without feelings of bitterness or resentment. As a result of all these qualities, he leaves behind a host of friends who will not soon forget him but will cherish for many years the memory of his kindness and helpfulness.

Brother Louis' unquestioned ability and the unique facets of his personality which we have just described have been recognized not only within the University but also beyond the confines of the campus. This explains why his services have been in such demand; indeed, it is doubtful if any other member of the University faculty has made an equal or greater total contribution to the community, the state, and the nation. On the local level he has been a member of the Citizen's Advisory Committee of the Dayton School Board and a member of the Trustees of the Dayton Montessori Society. On the state level he has been a member of the Archdiocesan School Board and a member of the Technical Research Committee and the Committee on Teacher Education of the Ohio College Association. On the national level he has been chairman of the Teacher Education Section and chairman of the Problems and Plans Committee of the National Catholic Education Association and is presently a member of its Research Council; he has been active in the annual conferences of the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards and has served on evaluating teams for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Small wonder that when news of Brother Louis' new appointment became known, the comment most frequently heard was that the University's great loss was some one else's tremendous gain! Brother Louis' talents and achievements have not gone unnoticed in the religious congregation to which he belongs. In 1946, 1951, and 1956 he was chosen by his fellow-religious to be a delegate to the General Chapter — no small honor when it is noted that only two priests and two brothers from each province throughout the world are elected to this highest legislative body in the So-

ciety. He was also elected for four successive five-year terms to the Provincial Chapter, the highest legislative body in the Cincinnati Province. It was inevitable, therefore, that sooner or later Brother Louis would be called upon to assume one of the major administrative offices in the Society. The keen sense of loss which we naturally feel should certainly not deter us from offering him our warmest and sincerest congratulations on this well-deserved promotion.

On this note we conclude our necessarily brief evaluation of Brother Louis and his work. Borrowing the technique that he so successfully employed in the Self-Survey, we have assessed his strengths and ever so gently hinted at his weaknesses. There remains yet the task of offering some appropriate recommendations.

We recommend, therefore, that the University always keep in memory the devoted service of Brother Louis and the outstanding contributions which he has made to its purposes, its progress, and its prestige. The future, of course, is unknown to us. Perhaps some day, when the mission assigned to him has been accomplished, he will return. But if, in the designs of God, this is not to be, the University should never forget the debt of gratitude that it owes to him.

We further recommend that Brother Louis continue to keep the University in his thoughts, his affections, and his prayers. Happily, as educational supervisor he will be responsible for the training of the young Marianists of the New York Province studying on our campus, and hence his ties with the University and with the School of Education will not be completely severed. But we are hopeful that his future visits will not be restricted to official business. The "welcome mat" will always be out for him in the new and shiny Chaminade Hall for which he dreamed and planned but which he was not destined to enjoy.

These, then, are our recommendations. Considering their number and their nature it is not likely that the President will feel constrained to appoint a "Watch-Dog Committee" to assure that they are carried out. But if there is the slightest skepticism on this point, the new Dean of Education will gladly volunteer to serve as a committee of one to see to it that they are not ignored or forgotten.