The President of Seton Hall University cordially invites you and your friends to attend THE INAUGURAL LECTURE OF THE INSTITUTE OF JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES by the Reverend John M. Oesterreicher His Excellency the Most Reverend Thomas A. Boland, D.D. Archbishop of Newark presiding.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER SEVENTH, 1953, 8:15 P.M. GRAND BALLROOM, ROBERT TREAT HOTEL 50 Park Place, Newark, New Jersey
WHY JUDEO-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

This is a report, not of things done, rather of things to be done. Undoubtedly, it is easier and more pleasant to speak of achievements, but achievements speak for themselves while plans are mute. Hence they seek to be told, that friends may share in them. And such sharing is good, even necessary, it seems to me, for those engaged in research and scholarship need, more than most, the support of friendship. If they are to work well, they have indeed to work in seclusion, but unless they leave their retreats from time to time, they will hardly attain wisdom. Not cool isolation, love leads to truth.

You remember, I am sure, Gulliver's travels and his visit to Laputa, an island of learned men. This is how he described them: "Their Heads were all reclined to the Right, or the Left; one of their Eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the Zenith." Every one of them was accompanied by a servant carrying a short stick, to which was fastened a bladder with little pebbles inside. With this he would softly flap his master on the eyes whenever, "wrapped up in cogitation," he was in danger of bouncing his head against a post. And when two were together, it was the office of this servant gently to strike the mouth of the one and the ear of the other, for, to quote Swift, "the Minds of these People are so taken up with intense Speculations, that they can neither speak, or attend to the Discourses of others, without being rouzed by some
external Taction upon the Organs of Speech and Hearing." Perhaps Swift's satire is needed to remind us that someone so remote as to feel neither the desire nor the need to commune would be a caricature of man. For, to say it again: the man of learning must be a man of love.

It is the hope of the founders of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies that, in God's good time, it will develop into a center, first of all, of research and publication, and then, secondly, of education. There may well be people who say: Research? How impractical! The teaching of classes, which lead to a degree and help in a career, that's sensible. But research - what's the good of that? The answer is simple. Though many men have made Communism what it is today, it might not have been at all were it not for one man who, day after day, sat in the British Museum reading and taking notes, writing and rewriting. The first volume of Das Kapital was published after almost two decades of study, the rest only after Marx's death. Few have read this massive book, and yet it has influenced millions. Quite apart from that, in this age of ours, which worships the useful, it might be good to do things that are not of immediate use, that cannot bear fruit today but only tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

Today, moreover, scholarship, indeed, all things of the mind, are looked on not only as odd and impractical but also as suspect. Without question, there have been many who misused their minds, who used them only to rebel against truth and virtue, faith and love, against God, against Christ and His Church: Still, St. Augustine's counsel, Intellectum valde ama, "Greatly love the mind,"
holds true. And the Church, in her wondrous respect for the gifts of God, declares with the firmness of dogma: The divinely given light of reason can arrive at the knowledge of God's existence, can know of Him who is the Incomprehensible. It can, as it were, knock at the adamantine gates, the inviolable doors of heaven. No one can act in the name of the Lord or claim the Church as guide if he disdains the labor and the works of the intellect, for there is little virtue in letting a talent lie idle, a gift from the Giver of all good things. In our day, when the mind has been pressed into the service of the revolt against God, Creator and Redeemer, intellectual work is more imperative than ever. To offset the damage done by this revolt, to set truth against its errors, to bring our age back to Christ, the works of mercy are needed, but no less scholarship -- in fact, a scholarship bolder, better, deeper, than that of the enemies of faith.

If I have begun with a defense of the mind, with a plea for understanding of research, study and scholarly work, particularly for understanding and work here in our own country - after all, part of the question I set out with His, "Why studies?"

But why Judaeo-Christian studies? The best answer, I think, might be a discussion of the several meanings of the the term "Judaeo-Christian." When we speak of the first centuries of the Church, the word refers to Christians of Jewish birth as distinguished from those of pagan origin. True, the distinction "Jewish Christian" and "Gentile Christian" carries with it unhappy memories of dissensions and heresies, of pride and envy on
the part of both. And yet it is a fruitful distinction even today, if it is made not to work any separation but to emphasize unity. The Church has always known herself to be the House built of Jews and Gentiles and will never relinquish her knowledge and claim. It is Christ the Cornerstone, St. Augustine rejoices, who, in order to form His Church, has brought together the wall whose living stones are Jews and the wall whose living stones are Gentiles. 2 Or, in the somewhat different picture St. Paul gives us: Christ is our Peace, He has made both (that is, Israel and the nations) one, He has broken down the wall that was a barrier between us (Eph. 2:14).

Early Christian art delighted to portray this union. The mosaics of San Lorenzo and Santa Pudenziana, for instance, show Christ enthroned, with Peter and Paul on His left hand and His right - St. Paul, who taught the nations, and St. Peter, who preached to his kinsmen at Pentecost. Together with the two Apostles, the two sacred cities appear in these ancient mosaics: Jerusalem, where Christ was proclaimed King of the Jews, and Bethlehem, where Magi acknowledged Him as Ruler of the Gentiles. From several churches in the Eternal City, there look down the figures of two women, one Jewish, the other Roman, and they are called Ecclesia ex circumcisione and Ecclesia ex gentibus, the Church drawn from the circumcision and from all the peoples of the earth. Yet nothing, to the patristic age, bespoke this oneness of all in the Church more than the manner of Christ's dying. When He hung upon the cross, His arms were outstretched, so that with the one He might woo the House of Jacob and with the other draw all the world, that He might in a single embrace unite them.