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Delivery

ADDRESS

of

HONORABLE HOMER CUMMINGS  
Attorney General of the United States

as

Representative of the President

at the Convocation honouring

WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL

Held at the

Catholic University of America

Wednesday, November 14, 1934,

9:00 P.M.

Most Reverend Chairman, Your Eminences, Your Excellencies, and  
Friends of the Catholic University of America:

I esteem it an honor to be present at this academic convocation celebrating the golden jubilee of the ordination of a priest who, in the fullness of time, has become the dean of the Catholic Bishops in America. The President has designated me to appear as his personal representative on this occasion, and has requested me to read the following letter written to his Eminence, William Cardinal O'Connell:

"November 14, 1934.

"The White House  
"Washington

"Your Eminence:

"I shall not be able to be present when the Catholic University of America will confer upon you, the Chairman of its Board of Trustees, the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. I regret very much that this is so, and I wish Your Eminence to be assured of my warmest congratulations and sincerest well wishes on this happy occasion.

"Honoring, as it does, the golden jubilee of your ordination to the priesthood, this academic convocation must also serve to recall the long and distinguished service you have rendered your Church, and the affectionate place you have won in the hearts of your fellow citizens.

"Priest for fifty years, Bishop for upwards of three decades, Archbishop since 1906, and Cardinal for nearly a quarter of a century, Your Eminence has paralleled this consecrated service with a real and

practical interest in good citizenship and inspiring patriotism. Your 'Recollections of Seventy Years' of life are indeed full and wholesome.

"Very sincerely yours,

/s/ "FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT"

It gives me personal satisfaction, also, in the presence of this distinguished audience, to add a word of tribute to the great Churchman, eminent citizen and ardent patriot to whom honor is here being done. I am reminded of another occasion, when there was celebrated, at this same University, the golden jubilee of the late Cardinal Gibbons, at that time Dean of the American Hierarchy. At a great convocation, attended by many dignitaries of Church and State, Cardinal Gibbons delivered an eloquent and moving address. Today, Cardinal O'Connell occupies the position held sixteen years ago by Cardinal Gibbons. In his power of expression, the brilliance of his career and his firm insistence upon the importance of religion in the life of nations, no less than in the lives of individuals, the Churchman whom we honor this evening shares with his great predecessor the affection and respect of his fellow Americans.

Others have described to you this evening his ecclesiastical career and his manifold activities as a Churchman. Cardinal O'Connell has not only served the church, but he has also served the nation. He has visualized religion as one of the foundations upon which rest public order and the progress of civilization; for without religion, public rectitude and private morals are exposed to dangers that neither the Government nor the individual dare face.

Perhaps his outstanding public service was rendered during the World War. He urgently desired peace, but when our country entered the conflict, he rallied the forces of his Church and brought them to the aid of the President and of the Nation. The hospitals and other facilities in the Boston Diocese were offered to the Government, and Cardinal O'Connell joined with other leaders of the Church in pledging to the Government the support of all Catholics. His splendid cooperation made him one of the outstanding figures of the Nation during the war.

Cardinal O'Connell, in short, has been a vigorous leader of a vigorous faith. In peace, no less than in war, his public utterances and the force of his example have reminded us that the spirit of neighborliness, the spirit of justice, and the spirit of religion are essential to all governments and to all peoples, that without them human institutions lose their effectiveness, human aspirations lose their meaning, and human hearts grow cold.

Your Eminence, the Nation honors you as a priest for fifty years, as a Prince of the Church, and as a benefactor of national life. May Divine Providence allot you many more years of usefulness to your Church and to your country.