



# PRESIDENT'S LETTER

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER TO PRESIDENT'S CLUB AND HERITAGE CIRCLE DONORS  
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following the  
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## HEALTHY FRUIT, HEALTHY TREES

My favorite moment in each school year is the night before our spring commencement. On this evening, our graduates and their families, along with faculty and many others from our campus community, come together in a downtown church for our annual baccalaureate service. This year, the service was hosted for the first time in Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral.

I have the honor of speaking to our graduates on their last evening as students at North Park and each year I reflect long and hard about what I should include in my remarks. What it is, exactly, that will serve our students well at this very important moment in their life's journey?

**This year I pointed to Jesus.** I began with a personal story and then connected our university mission—"to prepare students for lives of significance and service"—to Jesus's teaching. The personal story was an account of how this year, while recuperating at home during Holy Week from recent surgery, I decided to read each of the four Gospels from beginning to end in one sitting. Here's an excerpt from my words to the students:

I decided to give it a try: I started with Mark, because I knew this was the short one. The next day, I took on Matthew, then Luke, and eventually, John. None of this was new to me; surely, I've read each word of each Gospel before. But I had never before read each Gospel from beginning to end in a single sitting.

In this sacred exercise, I came to know Jesus as I had not known him before. I discovered, seemingly for the first time, how simple yet profound is the teaching of Jesus. I discovered that the meaning of what he spoke is so clear because of how readily he used word pictures to drive his point home.

At North Park, we're proud of our short and rather direct mission statement: "to prepare students for lives of significance and service." In the Gospels, Jesus addresses this ideal and paints a word picture we don't quickly forget. Here's what Jesus teaches about the responsibility of being prepared for a life of significance and service:

In Matthew: *"If you grow a healthy tree, you'll pick healthy fruit. If you grow a diseased tree, you'll pick worm-eaten fruit. The fruit tells you about the tree."*

Again in Luke, with only slight variation: *"You don't get wormy apples from a healthy tree, nor good apples off a diseased tree. The health of the apple tells the health of the tree."*

In my reading of the Gospels, I discovered that Jesus is less intent on



describing bad fruit and more focused on helping us know what healthy fruit looks like.

In Mark: *“Love others as well as you love yourself.”* Good fruit.

In Luke: *“Here’s a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them.”* Good fruit.

In Matthew: *“You are here to be the salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.”* God-flavors; God-colors; good fruit.

When I recently mentioned this verse from Matthew to a friend, she responded in all the simplicity of one of Jesus’s statements: “Name a color that isn’t a God-color. Name a flavor that isn’t a God-flavor.”

So here we have it—pure, simple, direct, in as clear a language as we could ever expect, from the master teacher himself. If after your years at North Park you’re still just a bit vague on what it means to live with significance and in service, then listen to Jesus: Be a healthy tree, one that bears good fruit; run away from the possibility of being a diseased tree, one that bears worm-infested fruit.

As an educator, I’m confident of this: You can’t go wrong following the teachings of Jesus.

## CAMPAIGN PROGRESS

For the past two years, you have been hearing from us about Campaign North Park. In response, you have joined us to support this important project.

I’m now very pleased to report that our progress with fundraising, architectural design, and a plan of finance has come sufficiently close to our goal that, at its meeting this past month, the North Park University Board of Trustees authorized the beginning of construction of our new 101,000-square-foot facility. Though work in each of these three areas continues, this building will provide wonderful new space in the very center of the campus for education in the sciences, as well as support for student engagement programs such as University Ministries, Urban Outreach, Career Planning and Internships, International Programs, Residence Life, and more.

But there’s more good news: The Board of Trustees also announced in May a decision to name this new building for two of North Park’s distinguished friends and supporters, Nancy and G. Timothy Johnson of Marblehead, Massachusetts.

Nancy is a graduate of the Swedish Covenant Hospital School of Nursing and served with medical missions in Indonesia. After attending North Park, Tim completed his education in medical school and established a highly-regarded professional career as Chief Medical Editor for ABC News.



*Architectural rendering of the Nancy and G. Timothy Johnson Center for Science and Community Life*

On October 26, 2012, we will gather on campus for the formal groundbreaking for this wonderful new facility. Nancy and Tim Johnson will join us, as will many other friends of North Park. We invite you to be with us as well, to symbolically begin construction of the Johnson Center for Science and Community Life.

## ANNUAL FUND

A new building like the Johnson Center is a fabulous addition to our campus and brings new life and energy to our entire educational program. We're deeply dependent on friends of North Park for gifts dedicated to construction of new facilities like this one.

Yet we are also deeply dependent on friends of North Park for support of the scholarships and financial aid awarded each year to our students. This very aid is critical for our students and is often supported through endowed scholarships. Our awarding of financial aid at North Park, however, is far greater than the resources available from endowed gifts. Each year, a large portion of the University's aid to students is awarded through our annual operating budget. And this scholarship support is funded directly from annual gifts to the University received from donors like you.

This is why I often say that **a gift to the Annual Fund should be the cornerstone of every donor's giving to North Park.** Every gift to the Annual Fund is used to

support student financial aid awarded annually for our undergraduates, graduate students, and seminarians. Everyone's gift counts, because every student counts.

I know I'm "preaching to the choir" in writing this. You are a faithful supporter of North Park, and as a result, you are a member of the President's Club and/or Heritage Circle. We deeply value your support and your faithfulness over successive years to sustain this very necessary and worthy aspect of our ministry together at North Park.

The beginning of a new school year is a perfect time to contribute to the Annual Fund. Please help us fund scholarship aid to our students by making your gift to the Annual Fund today.

## SUMMER READING

Periodically in this newsletter, I highlight a small number of books from my recent reading list, and I'm always delighted when this serves as a conversation starter with you. Here are some selections from recent months:

Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*

[On marriage:] It can be hard for extroverts to understand how badly introverts need to recharge at the end of a busy day. . . . It's also hard for introverts to understand just how hurtful their silence can be. (p. 228)

Lauren F. Winner, *Still: Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis*  
[On faith at mid-life:] . . . And yet in those same moments of strained belief, of not knowing where or if God is, it has also seemed that the Christian story keeps explaining who and where I am, better than any other story I know. (p. xiii)

Anne Lamott, *Some Assembly Required: A Journal of My Son's First Son*

[On grandparenting:] Kids are hard—they drive you crazy and break your heart—whereas grandchildren make you feel great about life, and yourself, and your ability to love someone unconditionally, finally, after all these years. (p. 32)

M. Daniel Carroll R., *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible*

Immigrants and refugees are people above all else, people caught up in the trials, tribulations, and joys of life. (p. 87)

Jim Signorelli, *StoryBranding: Creating Standout Brands Through the Power of Story*

Stories have been, and still are, the most persuasive tools in the arsenal of human communication. . . . Stories reveal truth, they don't preach it. (p. 4)

Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*

Over the course of six decades, some six million black southerners left the land of their forefathers and farmed out across the country for an uncertain existence in nearly every other corner of America. . . . It was the first mass act of independence by a people

who were in bondage in this country for far longer than they have been free. (pp. 9, 11)

Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift from the Sea*

[Life's challenge is to know] how to remain whole in the distractions of life, how to remain balanced, no matter what centrifugal forces tend to pull one off center; how to remain strong, no matter what shocks come in at the periphery and tend to crack the hub of the wheel. (p. 23)

## CLOSING REFLECTION

Linda and I leave tomorrow for a vacation with our five grandchildren (three born within the past three months!). The prayer book I often turn to includes this prayer for the care of children:

. . . Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ.

This is a good prayer for parents and grandparents alike. I realized recently that it is also a good prayer for educators, including university presidents. And as you join us in this prayer, our ministry with students will be strengthened. Thank you for your love for North Park.

With summer blessings,

