



Fr. Ted Hesburgh, C.S.C. 1917-2015

Reflections on the legacy of Fr. Ted Hesburgh and his impact on the Tantur Ecumenical Institute a year following his passing on February 26th, 2015.

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Contents

Introduction	1
His Good Deeds Go With Him	2
Personal Reflections of Tantur and Fr. Ted	3
Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Fr. Hesburgh, 1917-2015	5
Contributing Authors	8

Introduction

Dan Koski, Tantur Staff

A year has gone by since word of the passing of Fr. Ted Hesburgh, C.S.C, reached us in the Holy Land. As is custom in Christian traditions of the Middle East, we pause to remember him on the one-year anniversary of his death, drawing upon the thoughts and recollections of three fellow members of the Congregation of the Holy Cross who have each dedicated their lives to the mission of Tantur with similar dedication.



His Good Deeds Go With Him

Fr. Russ McDougall, C.S.C.
Rector, Tantur Ecumenical Institute

On March 4th of 2015, the Notre Dame community gathered in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart to give thanks for the life of Fr. Ted Hesburgh, president of the university for 35 years, from 1952 to 1987. The community here at Tantur has special reason to be thankful for his remarkable life. Though Pope Paul, Patriarch Athenagoras, Archbishop Michael Ramsey and other church leaders offered the vision for what they hoped Tantur might become, it was Fr. Ted's energy that helped nurture the vision to life. Through the network of relationships he cultivated, he was able to gather the financial and human resources that enabled Tantur's doors to open in 1972.

Fr. Ted would often say that he wanted the University of Notre Dame to be the place where the Church did its thinking. And he hoped Tantur would be the place where the Churches came together to think through together the hard questions we face on the road toward closer communion with one another.

We still have a long way to go. There are important ethical and theological questions, as well as questions of church discipline and order, that cause divisions both among and within the Churches. Fr. Ted's hope, and our continuing hope, is that the scholars and pastors and laypeople who form the Tantur community might help Christians to offer a thoughtful response to the difficult questions that have led to divisions between us, and between the Christian Churches and men and women of other faiths.

Here at Tantur we join with the Notre Dame community and with men and women around the world in giving thanks to God for Fr. Ted's remarkable life. His good deeds go with him, and bless us still. May God embrace him in love that knows no end.



Personal Reflections of Tantur and Father Ted

Rev. Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C.
President Emeritus, University of Notre Dame

**Ted Hesburgh always saw his efforts
that led to the creation of Tantur as a
personal mandate from Pope Paul VI.**



In the wake of Vatican II, the Pope wanted to create an entity that could promote ecumenical exchange among scholars, particularly those with common interest in the study of the bible. The International Advisory Board was established with that in mind. While Notre Dame oversaw the management of Tantur (and also subsidized the funding of the budget), the intention was that a cross-section of Christians from around the world would live in residence and also attend conferences held there.

In the transition from Ted Hesburgh's presidency to mine, I asked Ted to continue chairing the International Advisory Board while I chaired the governing board (which was made up of the Rector of Tantur, plus various Notre Dame administrators). Only after Ted's health declined did he step down from any direct role with the Institute. Many times Ted told me that he thought Tantur would be the ideal location for the highest level negotiations toward a definitive resolution of the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. He really thought that the gift of peace needed to be rooted in the religious faiths centered there.

Through the years, we had Advisory Board meetings on site in Jerusalem but also in Paris, Wells (England), London and the Notre Dame campus. Then Bishop George Carey hosted us in Wells one year and subsequently, as the Archbishop of Canterbury, he hosted us (with his wife, Eileen) at Lambeth Palace. As it turned out, Ted celebrated the first Catholic mass in the chapel at Lambeth since the Protestant Reformation not far from where Thomas Cranmer composed the Book of Common Prayer and near the room where Thomas More was tried for treason. For Ted, the alternations of Catholic and Anglican prayer in Lambeth was close to the heart of the mission of Tantur.

Ted was always quite proud of the quality of the library at Tantur, which he had worked so hard at collecting. He instinctively recognized that the attractiveness of

Tantur as a center of scholarly engagement was only partially a function of its physical location in the midst of the Holy Land. It also had to have a first-class library (and later integrated computer access) so that none of the researchers would lack for basic resources.

During the course of Ted's early negotiations for the land where Tantur is located, Ted became friends with Mayor Teddy Kolleck (from Jerusalem). This relationship later served the Institute well when new problems arose in relationship to the Israeli government.

Two friends of Ted who also made a great contribution to the development of Tantur were Frank Montana and I.A. O'Shaughnessy. Frank Montana was the chair of the Notre Dame Architecture department. He took on the work of designing the physical structure with great concern for not only its intended use but also the cultural context within which it would be situated. I. A. O'Shaughnessy not only provided a substantial part of the funding for the building, but he also established an endowment which has been used through the years to achieve balanced budgets.

During two intifadas and numerous other challenging circumstances, Ted Hesburgh remained a stalwart advocate for Tantur as a unique institution with the capacity to play a transformative role not only in the relationship among Christian ecclesial bodies but also in the effort to promote mutual understanding and respect among the three great religions of the book – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. God willing, someday peace with justice will indeed come to the land we call 'holy'.

Article photo of Fr. Ted Hesburgh, C.S.C. with Fr. Edward A. Malloy, C.S.C. is courtesy of the personal archives of Fr. Malloy.



Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Fr. Hesburgh, 1917-2015

Fr. Patrick Gaffney, C.S.C., Anthropology Department, University of Notre Dame

The passing of Fr. Theodore M. Hesburgh in late February of 2015 did not come as a surprise. At the age of 97, although his mind was sharp till the end, his physical condition showed many signs of wear. But for the most part, he accepted these limitations gracefully and frequently seemed to transform them into advantages rather than liabilities. As his eyes grew dim, for example, he began to ask students studying in the vicinity of his office on the thirteenth floor of the library if they could spare a few minutes to read him the daily newspaper. As word got out, dozens of students began to converge on the spot hoping for a chance to take their turn. Typically, they reported, reading him the newspaper would soon lead to a personal conversation that revealed to them a most extraordinary human being who showed a genuine interest in what they were studying, where they were going, and how they planned to light their path.

The memorials, eulogies, and tributes that followed his death on the campus of the University of Notre Dame made frequent reference to the long list of his remarkable accomplishments in public life. Those familiar with his biography did not need these reminders. But to hear the range and the influence of his involvement in the highest counsels of Church, state, economic development, and education almost numbs an awareness of how each separate task, each responsibility, meant a particular challenge which he met and almost always overcame.

Some singled out specific roles, like his work on the Civil Rights Commission from its inception in 1957 until he was replaced in 1972 by President Nixon after the commission, with Hesburgh as its chair, called attention to the administration's poor record in civil rights. It was the recommendations of this commission that led to the monumental Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Hesburgh's service and leadership had significant impact in numerous policy areas, such as his guidance of the Clemency Board under President Ford that reconciled thousands who had fled rather than serve in the military during the Viet Nam war. As chair of the Select Committee on Immigration and Refugees under President Carter, and later co-chair of the National Cambodia Crisis Committee,

Fr. Hesburgh pressed for major legislative reforms and oversaw massive famine relief amid the devastation left behind by the Khmer Rouge.

As chairman of the Rockefeller Foundation, chairman of the board of the Overseas Development Council and other posts, Fr. Hesburgh articulated an informed and conscientious commitment to improving the social realities for disadvantaged and marginal people in developing countries. His book *The Humane Imperative* (Yale University Press, 1974) takes on the big questions of population growth, food, overcrowding, government responsiveness, and world education, which he argues, require a bold new global alignment setting dignity and fundamental rights at the center of global north-south relationships.

Fr. Hesburgh's accomplishments as a pioneer in higher education fully justify his stature as a legend. He shepherded Notre Dame into a new era, doubling its size during his 35 year tenure as president, increasing its endowment from \$9 million to \$350 million, transforming its governing structure into a largely lay board, and, of course, admitting women undergraduates into what had been an all-men's school until 1972. Not least, of course, his insistence on the highest intellectual standards brought the university into top tier of the nation's schools. His fair-mindedness, his accessibility, and his sensitivity to persons enabled him to resolve many crises during the turbulent late 1960's that had doomed cooperation between students and administrators on many other university campuses.

But Fr. Hesburgh's dedication to the Church and his vision of ecumenical solidarity also marked every phase of his long life. No more substantial demonstration of this exists than the Ecumenical Institute for Theological Studies at Tantur in Jerusalem. Pope Paul VI entrusted this initiative to Fr. Hesburgh in 1964 when Fr. Ted was the newly elected president of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. But when the enormous scope of the project became clear as practical details were considered, Fr. Hesburgh quickly realized that the International Federation of Catholic Universities could not possibly succeed in establishing such an institute. Without delay, Fr. Hesburgh set about the organizing of a founding committee which later became the Academic Council consisting of 25 world-renowned theologians of Catholic, Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox churches.

The Second Vatican Council was in its fourth and final session when this group met to design the structure and to plot the concrete objectives of the institute which was finally inaugurated in September 1972 after many postponed deadlines. The importance of Fr. Hesburgh to the founding, the functioning, and the flourishing of Tantor during its first decades cannot be overestimated. At every critical juncture he sprang into action and found a way to surmount obstacles that many thought would likely lead to a loss of its mission or a collision amid the storms of Israeli and Palestinian rivalries. His tireless oversight of Tantor's academic administration, his almost single-handed labor in fund-raising, and his mobilization of global contacts among religious scholars and ecclesiastical officials made Tantor into a crossroads of theological research and spiritual renewal that looks ahead, after fifty years, to still great fruits of its potential.

Fr. Hesburgh once remarked that of all his external projects, Tantor required by far the most sustained effort to build, to maintain, and to recruit the necessary talent. But Fr. Hesburgh was not only a man who knew how to get things done by bringing others together to work for a shared ideal. He was also a visionary, indeed, a prophet as well as a priest, whose rich spiritual life was wondrously fused with generosity, compassion, and a readiness to answer when called. He often prayed "Come Holy Spirit" and his life offers a stunning example of what marvels may follow when this invocation arises from a humble heart filled with faith and hope in the untold promises of the New Jerusalem.



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Undated photo of Pope Paul VI with Fr. Ted Hesburgh, courtesy of the University of Notre Dame.

