Father James Richard Lackenmier, C.S.C., you were born and raised in Buffalo, New York and earned your baccalaureate degree from Stonehill College in Boston in 1961. You completed your study for the priesthood by achieving your Licensure in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in 1965 before completing two back-to-back masters degrees, first in English from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, the second in Theology and Literature from the University of Chicago. During these latter efforts you taught English in high school, served as chaplain at St. Xavier College in Chicago, and became Director of Collegiate Formation at Moreau Seminary in Notre Dame, Indiana. In 1974 you came to King's College as Director of Campus Ministry, beginning a quarter-century of distinguished service which is about to conclude with a presidency that has lasted for eighteen years. For sheer longevity in that pressure-cooker office, you deserve recognition. Through the eyes of the competitor on South River Street one can observe, however, that under your gifted leadership King's has risen to a new level of distinction educationally, the physical campus has been dramatically improved, the endowment has grown substantially, and King's intimate relationship to the surrounding community has been strengthened. Building upon the educational vision of your predecessors, you have as the master fund raiser of the Valley brought support to this vision and sharpened it through a most successful strategic planning process. King's College's outcomes-based general education has gained national recognition and your support for faculty development, in the service of that education, has helped you recruit and retain a talented faculty.

Your colleagues at King's will define in the months ahead the precise characteristics of your rich legacy to that proud Holy Cross institution. As one of your colleagues in the wider community, I can attest to the extraordinarily varied and dedicated leadership you have provided to the Wyoming Valley. You have served on boards, frequently as chair, of organizations dealing with economic development, health care, scouting, historic preservation, library services, county government reform and, of course, human services. You chaired the successful 1986 United Way Campaign and were a founding board member and seven-year veteran of the innovative Earth Conservancy. The community has recognized your contributions with some of its most prestigious awards: the Rotary Foundation Paul Harris Award, the Distinguished Eagle Scout Award; the Wyoming Valley Interfaith Council Citation of Distinction for Devoted Service to the Cause of Human Welfare, and the Boy Scouts' 1994 Distinguished Citizens Award.

Your leadership in education extends from the local level and the Council of Presidents and Project LEARN to the state where you have served on boards, and again frequently as chair, of organizations for college and universities, and to the region where you have served for six years as an elected member of the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Universities, the focal point for regional accreditation of institutions like King's and Wilkes. In addition, you have held leadership roles among the Holy Cross institutions, including service as a trustee for your alma mater, Stonehill College and presently as a member of the Board of Regents of the University of Portland. Your global awareness as well as your deep belief in all humanity has been expressed through your extended visits to the Holy Cross facilities in Peru.

In all these activities you have brought a keen sensitivity to the views and circumstances of others. A man who has the patience and the skill to live and work creatively with committees, you help widely diverse interests and perspectives to merge to help fulfill an organization's mission. While gentle of demeanor, you have shown that you have a backbone of steel in reaching and carrying out difficult decisions. While you encourage all viewpoints to be expressed, you help guide a group to a sound conclusion, frequently the point of view you held in the beginning.
When you are part of an organization and present at its meetings, the group has its best chance of fulfilling its potential. Gracious, unfailingly generous, and always civil, you are a model of thoughtful and active citizenship.

John Nason, former President of Swarthmore College, said of our profession: “The [college] President is expected to be an educator, to have been at some time a scholar, to have judgment about finance, to know something of construction, maintenance and labor policy, to speak virtually continuously in words that charm but never offend, to take bold positions with which no one will disagree, to consult everyone and follow all proffered advice, and to do everything through committees, but with great speed and without error." As your fortunate partner in the Council of Presidents and the Earth Conservancy, I have firsthand experience and knowledge of how close you come to this standard. I also have knowledge of your deep commitment to education and to human betterment. It is particularly pleasing for me, therefore, by the power of the Board of Trustees of Wilkes University and of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, to bestow upon you, Father James Richard Lackenmier, the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, with all the rights and privileges appertaining thereto.