

**Remarks of Orlando Sanchez  
Ross M. Lence Memorial Service  
December 1, 2006  
A.D. Bruce Religion Center  
University of Houston**

It was almost 25 years ago I encountered The Reasonable Mr. Lence. What I didn't know then was how profoundly Ross would change my life. I came to this campus seeking a degree, but uncertain about the direction of my life. I remember that fall semester when someone had recommended I seek the advice of Dr. Lence. I tried, on several occasions, to visit with him, but he was either not there or the line at his door was interminable.

I wondered then why so many students waited for hours to see this little man, but had decided I would not wait; I thought I'd catch him some other day. That day was the following week. As I got off the elevator on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of PGH I caught a glimpse of Dr. Lence as he rounded the corner towards his office. I thought it was my lucky day as he only had 8 students following him. I shouted out to him Dr. Lence! He stopped, turned and glared at me, and then he kept walking. As I turned the corner, I realized there was, yet another line of 20 students; I decided to wait my turn....it was the best decision of my life.

From that day forward, he became my "Teacher." Sure Dr. Lence saw to it I graduated and read the important classical works, but more importantly, he taught me, through example, how to live my life. He became my mentor, friend and ultimately, my daughter's Godfather.

I could not foresee our relationship blossoming as it did for I was quite angry a few weeks after our first encounter. You see, I had allowed him to convince me to sign-up for one of his classes in spite of the general consensus among some students on campus to stay away. I was angry because I had been given my first assignment in his class: to compose a 3-page paper on Niccolo Machiavelli's The Prince. You all know the question....it begins: "In what Manner and to what extent....."

I spent hours on the assignment only to have it returned, what appeared to be half way through the semester, completely covered in red fountain pen ink with the conclusion: "Mr. Sanchez, I requested a 3 page analytical paper on the subject, not the after- dinner speech you have

presented here.” While I won’t reveal the grade I received on the paper, let’s just say it’s one of the lowest the University can give. That was my first glimpse of how Ross operated. That was the beginning of my real education.

One of the things that struck me most poignantly about Dr. Lence is the anguish he’d experience when one of his students had difficulty paying his or her tuition. He took it so personally and went to great lengths to see to it the student found financial aid, even if it meant reaching into his own pocket... foregoing his beloved bottle of Château Margaux.

Not only did Ross want his students to sharpen their reasoning skills, he simultaneously, taught us about the redemptive qualities of humanity. His purpose for spending hours with us, his students, I believe, was to instill in us the values necessary to live a life of fulfillment through service to others.

Dr. Lence’s faith, which was unshakable, teaches:

- Your light must shine before men, so that they may see the goodness in your acts.
- Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors.
- Forgive others if you are to be forgiven.
- Treat others as you’d like to be treated
- Keep your deeds of mercy secret
- One cannot give themselves to God and money
- Finally, anyone who hears these words and puts them into practice will be like the wise man who built his house on rock.

I often wondered why would and how could this man spend so many hours with what appeared to be so many people like me -- lost souls --and the answer came to me while reading a passage on the meaning of love. “What then is love? Cheerful sacrifice!”

Mother Teresa was once quoted as saying; “There is nothing that cannot be borne with cheerful alacrity by those who love one another.” Ross endured each one of us with cheerful alacrity.” I doubt any of us here today would disagree that Ross did indeed love us and that he lived his life, according to the teachings of his faith. From my perspective, the gift he gave me and countless others was shedding his shining light upon us.

Finally, none of the foregoing comes to us naturally, as any of us who’ve read one of Ross’s assigned readings, the *Grand Inquisitor* knows, these values are taught to us. Let no one leave here today whom Ross, has touched, and whose life Ross has changed, and not acknowledge the “Rock” of his life -- his mother Nickie.

Let me pause here for John Lence reminded me last night that Ross always told him “Anyone who interferes with another person’s legend, will never find his own.”

May the peace and blessing of Almighty God be with you.