

*Remarks, Funeral of Paul Cashman Reardon, St. Paul's Church, Hingham, August 3, 1988, delivered by The Rev. Dr. Peter J. Gomes, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals, Harvard University; and Secretary of the Pilgrim Society*

We are a gathering of friends whose lives were enriched by the friendship of Paul Reardon, and whose lives are now diminished by his departure from them. It is his life that has brought us together in warm fellowship over the years, and his death reminds us just how rich he made us all in our lives with him.

There is the Honorable Mr. Justice Reardon: the Judge. If God were to paint a portrait of a Judge, and give it a manner and a robe, it would look like, sound like, and move like the Honorable Mr. Justice Reardon, silk top hat and all. His very presence inspired confidence: his judicial bulk did not intimidate -- it reassured, and all who served with him, or under him, or were served by him, recognized that here was a man you could count on to do justice, love mercy, and walk, humbly, with his God.

When Paul Reardon took his degree from Harvard College in the Class of 1932, President Lowell preached the Baccalaureate sermon in which among other things he exhorted the young men about to enter into the Depression: "So live that everyone may have confidence not only in your honesty, but also in your wisdom and your courage. Men are not born with wisdom: they acquire it by habitual self-control, by looking not at the popular impulse of the day, but at those principles that endure and lie at the base of civilized society--all social life, all stability and progress, depend upon each man's confidence in his neighbor, a reliance upon him to do his duty."

Few could have foreseen a more complete fulfillment of that charge to the Class of 1932 than that which expressed itself in the life and career of our dear friend Paul. He could be relied upon: he did his duty, and with courage, imagination, and wit.

"A Judge", they say in the cynical parlance of Massachusetts politics, "is a lawyer who is a friend of the Governor." How fortunate for the Commonwealth that Governor Herter and Governor Volpe had the good sense and good taste to see that Paul Reardon was considerably more than a friend: they recognized that the Commonwealth would be enriched by the presence on the bench of this honest and good man. Today we stand in their debt.

But it was our friend who was the Judge, not the Judge who was our friend, and it is that prior and ultimate relationship that brings us all here today, for bench and bar were transcended by friendship and hospitality, and these were never better expressed or dispensed than when the Judge presided over the modest arrangements at Boot Pond: indeed he might well be thought of as the Squire of Boot Pond, if a pond can have a squire. He swam with authority, he dispensed chowder with authority, he put up jars of beach plum jam with authority, and he stood tall always in the midst of family, friends, and colleagues from around the world in the civilizing simplicities of that ancient Plymouth wood and pond: there we knew him at his best.

But there are other places where he flourished as well and which because of him flourished. Paul Reardon dressed for Commencement Day at Harvard was always a glorious sight. Paul Reardon at Friday lunch at the Tavern meant that the talk would be both witty and informed. Paul Reardon as President of the Pilgrim Society meant that Forefathers' Day would be kept with style and substance. Paul Reardon on the porch at Boot Pond meant that God was in his heaven and all was right with the world.

Paul was at home in many places, and now he is at home with God, where he belongs, and we are left with all and the best that many man can leave us. He died as he lived, faithful to Christ, faithful to man, in the words of St. Paul, "A workman who needn't be ashamed." Our sorrow yields to gratitude: Thanks be to God.