

REMARKS BY THE GOVERNOR
OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF PUERTO RICO
HONORABLE RAFAEL HERNANDEZ COLON
UPON PRESENTING THE 1989 ALBERT SCHWEITZER
PRIZE FOR HUMANITARIANISM TO
SISTER M. ISOLINA FERRE
IN JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 20, 1989

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Each time I visit my Alma Mater pleasant memories come to my mind, along with the natural feelings of pride and gratitude that all Johns Hopkins students share. Today I will add to this cherished recollection of special moments a very important one. The Johns Hopkins University awards Mr. Dwayne Andreas with the Schweitzer Gold Medal for his outstanding achievements and confers the 1989 Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism to Sister Isolina Ferré. I have been granted the honor of presenting the prize to this great Puerto Rican woman; it is a distinction I shall never forget, for which I thank the Board of Trustees.

Sister Isolina, as we all affectionately call her in Puerto Rico, embodies the noblest moral values and beliefs for which we stand as a people; those that honor the spirit of man, those that instill faith in us.

Her life is the story of a brave woman, the youngest of a wealthy family, that at the early age of twelve already dreamed of becoming a missionary.

Following the voice of her heart, at the age of 21 she began her endless struggle to bring about change and hope to the poor, to the oppressed, to the sick and to the elder. Since then, Sister Isolina has been deeply committed to the full realization of human capabilities of people.

Coal miners, immigrants, neglected communities, minority groups, and juvenile gangs were for Sister Isolina fertile soil where the seed of love could flourish. Her long missionary work in America, her studies in Sociology and Criminology soon gave birth to a new will: to return to the place where she was born and fight delinquency through community involvement.

And so, she began to work in the socially disadvantaged community of La Playa. Since 1968 she has been helping them help themselves; liberating those who feel weak and abandoned through the power of education and work; inculcating in those who feel impotent and vulnerable a sense of purpose and pride, of

self-respect and self-reliance; inspiring in the young the motivating power to succeed.

Believing, as I do, that the most profound and lasting social changes are achieved through quiet revolutions, then I must confess, as strange as it may seem, Sister Isolina is a most perilous revolutionary! Her battle cry has been to rehabilitate, to convert those who transgress the law into useful citizens and even into community leaders. Helping them discover human dignity in public purpose. She has effectively fought through the years the economic and social barriers that still deprive many from fulfilling their potential.

Sister Isolina has a favorite saying: "The greatness of God is man at his fullest". Her social work has been oriented to attain the optimum development of a people, and through it, she has not only brought a new meaning to the lives of many Puerto Rican families, but also she has helped our government in satisfying basic material needs,

battling social ills, increasing educational opportunities and defending human dignity.

On this memorable occasion I wish to thank Sister Isolina for all that she has given us. Thank you, Sister, for being among us, for showing us the way with your gifted and generous leadership. Thank you, Sister, for the essence of your very useful life.

I feel proud and honored as a Puerto Rican to know that your farsighted leadership and your profound christian humanism is once again recognized and rewarded. May God Bless you always.
