2006 Arrupe Award Presentation  
Remarks by University President Rev. Scott R. Pilarz, S.J.

This is a great week and a great day for The University of Scranton. We are remembering and, more importantly, recommitting ourselves to the spirit that has animated this enterprise since 1942 when the Jesuits arrived in Scranton. When they arrived, they took responsibility for an institution that dates back to an audacious dream conceived in 1888 by the first bishop of Scranton. Bishop O’Hara imagined that the University would light up our valley with the fires of learning. Even then there was an echo of Ignatius Loyola in the University’s inspiration. Centuries before, Ignatius hoped that graduates of Jesuit schools would “go and set the world on fire.” This is a week of light and fire. And today we mark a very special moment in this celebration of our heritage. We welcome a great Jesuit priest, scientist, teacher and scholar, George Coyne.

Fr. Coyne stands prominently in the line of Jesuits who have served the Church and the world through their work in the sciences. Convinced that God can be sought in all things, Jesuit scientists since the sixteenth century have been working to help us understand how God’s world works. Studying the stars and planets, is for Fr. Coyne, a way of promoting God’s greater glory and advancing the human cause. There is no work more characteristically Jesuit than that. Fr. Coyne’s presence on our campus is both a consolation, in the Ignatian sense of that word, and an inspiration. Today he engages us in the work of a Catholic and Jesuit University.

This week, America magazine, the journal of opinion published by American Jesuits, featured an editorial on the nature of our work. Let me cite some of it for you: “the vitality of life on a Catholic campus should be measured far more by the positive initiatives the institution takes than by the narrow boundaries it observes. The catholic intellectual and religious tradition should be the source of programs and projects on Catholic campuses that other colleges and universities would have neither the interest nor the resources to promote. Furthermore, a Catholic institution, confident in the strength of its traditions, will not retreat from the challenge of engaging competing ideas in the dialogue that is at the heart of a lively university culture [including] the dialogue between Catholic tradition and contemporary culture, between faith and science.”

On behalf of the University community, I want to thank Fr. Coyne for enriching our dialogue and inspiring us to embrace more fully our Jesuit heritage.