

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;
I come to bury Antonino, not to praise him.
The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones;
So let it be with Antonino. The noble Burkhard
Hath told you Antonino was a good fellow:
If it were so, it was a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Antonino answer'd it.
For Burkhard is an honourable man.

Dear colleagues, and may I say dear friends,

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot.

So, there was a time for me in ESHA. It was a good time for me, and I hope for ESHA. Indeed, it could have no better conclusion than this conference. It has been for me a great reason of joy and of pride to see so many educators from every part of Europe and beyond gathered in Rome under the name of ESHA.

ESHA resumes in its name two overarching concepts: Education and Europe. Those are the concepts to which all my life has been dedicated. I began to teach when I was 22, that is to say 40 years ago. Since then, I have always been dealing with education, in many different ways: and in the end, giving part of my time and of my efforts to ESHA. I like to think of this as of an ascending path, from my little classroom to the schools in their entirety, that I have been leading for so many years, to my national association of heads, to the European association that – thanks to your trust and to your friendship – I had the privilege to represent in the past years.

Europe has been the other inspiring idea of my personal and professional life. My first serious involvement in Europe dates back to 36 years ago, and she is sitting in this same room at the moment. Let me share with you something that is very personal to me: should this nice lady from France, should Chantal not have married me and walked hand in the hand with me for all that time, and backed me in the moments of the proof, I would probably never have come to Europe and to ESHA.

If this was a grievous fault, I must say that I have not grievously answered it. Instead, I have been greatly rewarded for it.

But, let's come back to ESHA. I would like to say that representing ESHA gave me, among other privileges, the opportunity of meeting so many educators beyond Europe's boundaries and spread all over the world. From each of them I learnt something. And some of them are also sitting in this room. I thank them very warmly and I am especially glad that they could and would be here in this day of my farewell to arms.

Once a teacher, always a teacher: when they give you the floor, you never abandon it. Not to incur that risk – maybe I already incurred it – I am not going to add more words to this even too long act of thanks.

There is only one more thing that I want to add. It has been said: “Do not ask what America can do for you. Think of what you can do for America”.

Based on my experience, I would say that – when you believe in it – Education and Europe will eventually give you more than they will demand on you.

You wanted to thank me. I am grateful for this. But it’s up to me to thank ESHA and all of you, my colleagues – and may I say my friends. Since I received from you and ESHA much more than I put in it.

Thank you.

Antonino Petrolino
ESHA Past President

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