**A.M. Capron, Phi Kappa Phi “Scholar” Award, August 5, 2022**

Many thanks for that generous introduction and, of course, for the honor you have bestowed upon me and, I believe, upon our chapter at the University of Southern California. I must say that being introduced as the 2022-24 Scholar before this assemblage of Phi Kappa Phi leaders and scholars—especially the impressive young awardees portrayed in the slide show—is a very humbling experience.

 Perhaps this a time for us all to be humble, as we ask whether we are capable of meeting the challenges facing education today—not only the difficulty of engaging our students, whose academic careers have been adversely affected by the pandemic, but the greater challenge posed by PKP’s motto, “Let the love of learning rule humanity.”

 At no time in the 125 years since our Honor Society was founded has “learning” been more needed. By this, I mean not only “learning” as knowledge in the natural and social sciences and engineering, and in the learned professions, but also the cultivation of empathy, imagination, and ethical values which comes from engagement with philosophy, religion, poetry, novels, and memoirs, as well as art, music, dance, film and theatre. And what about experiential knowledge? Are our students and faculty learning about people who are different than themselves and about how to work with them in diverse teams to tackle the problems of our nation and the world? Finally, does their love of learning go beyond mastery of a set of information and encompass the process of developing new knowledge, the curiosity to engage in that process of seeking answers, and the habit of requiring evidence and reasoning when making decisions or taking actions?

Just think how different our present world would be if it were “ruled” in this way. If instead of high-decibel disputes and denunciations, we had reasoned debates based on evidence, with recognition of its limits. Discord wouldn’t disappear, but it could be rational and fact-based, thus allowing different value preferences to be recognized, not submerged by unsubstantiated claims and the invective that occurs when distrust and a modern form of tribalism prevails in society.

Yet I am not sure that the prescription, “Let the love of learning rule humanity,” can bring us to that result, either within our own country or the world as a whole. After all, scientific knowledge produced Covid-19 vaccines in record time but it also produced the planes and rockets that have rained death and destruction on Ukraine. “Learning” has produced both the means to communicate with a vehicle traversing the planet Mars and the technologies that have made possible the instantaneous spread of disinformation that undermines societal cohesion and threatens the future of democracy.

Thus, the Phi Kappa Phi motto today may need a further injunction. As we research and teach, it may not be enough for us to let the love of learning govern our actions, but also, to “Let our love of humanity rule our learning.”

Thank you.