

# INAUGURAL ADDRESS

*Manuel F. Ayau*

UNIVERSIDAD FRANCISCO MARROQUÍN

January 15, 1972



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Presented at the inauguration of  
UNIVERSIDAD FRANCISCO MARROQUÍN  
Guatemala City, on January 15, 1972  
by the president of the university  
Manuel F. Ayau.

**W**e begin today the realization of a dream, long cherished and enriched by each of the founders of Universidad Francisco Marroquín. Some have generously donated part of their assets; others have sacrificed time from their vital activities; and others have given the university the form and structure necessary to bring about its birth. All have strengthened the dream with their faith in the youth and the future of our country. To all of them, our profound gratitude.

I would like to focus on the relationships between the institutions and the ideologies of those who direct them, but first I would make some general observations.

It is an accepted fact that a person does not knowingly deceive himself. He attempts to use pure reason to avoid the contamination of prejudice. He

knows that prejudice leads a person to adopt the wrong means, and that the wrong means cannot lead to the right ends.

**No one has a monopoly on truth.** Men and women of good will who are working not only for their own benefit or for rewards in an afterlife, but also for the welfare of humankind, have many differences of opinion, due not to ill will but to sincere disagreement over complex ideas. Such differences are constructive so long as they do not degenerate into violent intransigence. They afford us the opportunity to analyze our own convictions. Unless you understand the argument of the person who disagrees with you better than he does, you cannot be sure that you are right. Of course those who argue with people of ill will waste their time. But those who refuse to argue with people of good will forgo an opportunity to develop their intellect.

**In the history of humankind,** freedom of belief has been defended with life itself, innumerable times. This is ample proof of the value that human beings have always placed on freedom of conscience, thought and expression.

**Peace becomes impossible to obtain** when someone tries to impose common beliefs on all. It is sometimes said that the differences of opinion are in themselves the cause of conflict and must be eliminated, by force if necessary, in order to preserve peace. I believe that the reverse is true. Conflicts occur where diversity of ideas is not tolerated because, as an illustrious Mexican statesman said, peace is achieved through respecting other people's rights.

Certain ideological positions are mutually exclusive, such as socialism and liberal democracy. Nevertheless, both positions are defended by men and women of goodwill. These differences of opinion among people will necessarily be reflected in the character of the institutions that these people create.

Many institutions, such as universities, are directed by persons who, rightly or wrongly, believe in the validity of their convictions. Should they come to realize that it is some other theory that is valid, and if they are intellectually honest, they will change their opinions and once again find themselves in the position of defending as valid those opinions they thereafter hold as true.

Because every institutional hierarchy will judge new members according to the beliefs considered valid by those called upon to do the judging, it is only natural that in institutions there prevails community of beliefs based on fundamental values. The converse situation would be as incongruous as a religious institution directed by atheists, or a socialist institution by liberals (believers in liberty). In either case, the authorities would consider unqualified those persons who did not share the convictions “of the institution.”

We, the founders of Universidad Francisco Marroquín, hold as valid certain convictions; although some of them are shared with us by directors of other universities, we have considered it necessary to found another. We believe that there should exist an opportunity for

pursuing academic excellence different from those already in existence; an opportunity that differs regarding the philosophy of social order and the type of professional training conducive to the peaceful progress of civilizations.


Many of these ideas have already been published in the *Philosophy Statement* of the university; however, on this occasion, as president I must be very frank about those convictions I personally hold. This personal declaration is of interest for two reasons. First, because of the reasons I




mentioned earlier, it is inevitable that the hierarchy of this university will be influenced by these convictions and, as a consequence, in some measure will serve to anticipate the character of the university. The second reason is that since I have been honored with the responsibilities of this office, such delegation implies that the founders have made their choice taking these convictions into account, which even if not shared by each and all with perfect uniformity do reflect the spirit in which the university has been created, a spirit that must be made known to all of those who participate as donors, professors, administrators and students.



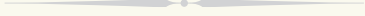
We firmly believe in the capacity of imperfect human beings to be better able to realize their destiny when free and not when compelled by the collective entity personified by the state.



We believe in individual rights. Freedom and property must always be respected, not only because they are innate to the human being, but also because of their utilitarian value to society. We do not think, therefore, that there exists any conflict between individual rights and social interest, such as could exist between individual interest and general interest.




We believe that truth or justice cannot be discovered by counting votes. We believe in democracy, but we also hold that, whereas the suffrage is an adequate method of determining the wishes of the majority and of deciding on matters of procedure, it is not the way to discover truth or justice.




We believe in the rule of law and not of persons or groups of persons, be they a minority or a majority. We believe in lawful government based on abstract general rules of just conduct that do not discriminate because of race, religion or economic position and that allow people to plan their lives in the certainty that results of their acts, when within the law, will be respected.




We believe that the spontaneous order that arises when persons act freely and peacefully to achieve their common material and spiritual ends is far superior to a designed social order imposed deliberately—a type of organization proper only to a business, a government or an army.



We believe that only responsible persons create prosperous and peaceful civilizations and that where there is no freedom, responsibility does not flourish.



We believe that there exists only one justice; that justice which gives to each his own. And we believe that any attempt to qualify justice tends to cause conflicts and to destroy justice itself.



We believe that a pluralistic and democratic society will always offer the greatest opportunity for progress and peace. In such a society the only possible means to gain acceptance of an idea is through persuasion and not coercion, through respect and not through violence. In such a society, precisely because people are free, diverse and multiple, experimentation has ample room to supplement the lack of human omniscience.

We are on the threshold of a difficult and important task. The youth of our country, like the youth all over the world, is anxious for improvement.

Guatemala has a long history of university education. Ever since the time when the illustrious Bishop Francisco Marroquín founded the college of Santo Tomás, the study of science and the arts has had a home in our land. Each new institution of higher education must feel duty bound to preserve and strengthen this long academic tradition.

May God help us and show us the road to the truth.

In closing, I would like to paraphrase several lines from the great Guatemalan poet Alberto Velásquez,

<i>Que Dios nos ayude a formar hombres</i>	May God help us shape men
<i>Hombres limpios y sin antifaz,</i>	Honest men without masks,
<i>Que vivan una vida sin sombras,</i>	Who live lives without shadows,
<i>Y que sepan decir la verdad.</i>	And who know how to speak the truth.
<i>Que hagan parábolas de su conducta</i>	May their actions inspire parables
<i>Y llenen de actos nobles su parquedad.</i>	And their moderation reflect noble deeds.
<i>Que con manos diligentes siembren el árbol del pan,</i>	May they sow their daily bread with diligent hands,
<i>Y fecundos, fuertes y jóvenes,</i>	And fertile, strong, and young,
<i>Les baste su propio afán,</i>	their own labor be all they need,
<i>Que busquen siempre la verdad,</i>	May they always seek the truth,
<i>Manteniendo siempre su humildad.</i>	And hold fast to their humility.



MANUEL F. AYAU

1925 - 2010

A stylized, handwritten signature in light blue ink, positioned to the right of the text. The signature is fluid and cursive, appearing to read 'Manuel F. Ayau'.



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Our mission is to teach and disseminate the ethical, legal and economic principles of a society of free and responsible persons.

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