

## CINCINNATI ORDINATION BENEDICTION

June 1, 2024

Richard S. Sarason

My dear newest colleagues, families, and friends:

Fifty years ago today—on this very day and date—our teacher Rabbi Jacob Rader Marcus, the founder of the American Jewish Archives, stood at this very spot and gave a charge to me and my fellow ordinees, the Cincinnati class of 1974. Now, at the conclusion of this service of your ordination, I share that charge with you in Dr. Marcus's own words:

You must be concerned not with our numbers, but with quality, intelligence, dedication.

This is your real joy. Is it your role to be a fund raiser, an amateur architect, a social worker, a psychiatrist, a guitar player? For this were you created? In these recondite disciplines there are other people more competent than you. Your duty is to study, to know, to learn, to teach, to lead, to make every Jewish school a Zion and every child a messiah.

Every rabbi has 3,000 years of intelligent ancestors. If you do not become increasingly more and more a learned rabbi, you betray the heritage of those who gave you birth.

Without learning there is no Judaism. Count that day lost in which you have not opened a Jewish book. If you do not learn, you cannot lead; if you do not study you are only a hireling.

Every one of you was born with a patent of nobility; be worthy of it. I would ask of you that you conduct yourselves as if the community you will serve was the last hope of humanity and it was your sacred privilege to save it. The centrality of Jewry, of Judaism, lies in your aspirations, nowhere else.

You must be the incarnation of Jewish learning and morality, carrying with you, wherever you go, our exalted tradition, our spiritual homeland.

Never succumb to doubt; constantly affirm that Jews and Judaism will abide. We have already survived a dozen holocausts, bearing witness to the world that a people lives by the quality of its loyalties.

So now we turn to you, the generation in whom lies our hope for a better world. "Ride on and prosper." And may the God of our ancestors give you the courage so to rise to ever greater spiritual and intellectual heights, that you and all of us may cry out, triumphantly and exultantly, to all the ages yet to come: "I shall not die but live and declare the works of the Eternal." And so may it be.