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## John Feerick: A Lawyer's Compass

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## John Feerick: A Lawyer's Compass

### Cover Page Footnote

Professor & Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Fordham University School of Law.

# JOHN FEERICK, A LAWYER'S COMPASS

*Benjamin C. Zipursky\**

It was my good fortune to join the administration of Fordham School of Law during John Feerick's tenure as Dean. The pleasure of working on a daily basis with John stands on equal footing with the value of watching, from the inside, an unusually successful and enduring example of compassionate and altruistic leadership. It is a small, but not insignificant consolation of John's stepping down that he is not stepping out; he will be joining us as a colleague, in the relatively relaxing role of Law Professor that he has long awaited.

Several of John Feerick's contributions to the inner life of Fordham School of Law stand out as emblematic of the man himself. First and foremost is the image of Fordham as a school in the service of others. I would cluster with that the ascendancy of our Stein Center for Law and Ethics, which John guided from its inception to its maturity as a national leader of legal ethics; our Public Interest Resources Center, for which John and Fordham have been granted numerous awards; the innovative Institute on Religion, Law & Lawyer's Work; and our Crowley Program in International Human Rights, which in only a few years has become, arguably, the leading academic International Human Rights project in the country. It has taken vision, leadership, and—to put it gently—*deaning* to establish these programs and to help them develop into what they are today.

Second, John has established one of the leading clinical programs in the country, responding powerfully and decisively to the ABA's and the legal profession's demand that law schools begin taking greater responsibility for educating individuals who could really function as attorneys for their clients. Our programs, stretching from child/family interdisciplinary center to securities arbitration and community development, mirror the breadth of legal practice and the depth of need in New York City. John Feerick himself has responded to that deep need, and brought his energy and enthusiasm for diverse lawyering experiences to the creation of a burgeoning aspect of today's law school learning.

Third, Fordham has emerged as a leading light in constitutional law, constitutional theory, and constitutional history. As the principal

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drafter of the Twenty-Fifth Amendment, John's passion for the Constitution is not a surprise. But, the level of what Sandy Levinson calls "constitutional faith"<sup>1</sup> displayed by John, the level of commitment to our democracy's overall convictions, and the instinct to build upon these convictions is unusually great. And so it is fitting, and a credit to us, that the school has built breadth and excellence in this area.

Finally, under John Feerick's leadership Fordham has become a center for International law. With widely recognized graduate programs and symposia in banking, corporate, antitrust, and intellectual property law; with richness and depth in trade and comparative law; and with passion and conviction in international human rights, we have stayed on the ever sharper cutting edge of globalism.

I am enumerating these achievements of John Feerick not as a marketing ploy for the law school, but to make a point about what a special person John is. John Feerick defies the banal and oft-repeated statements that today's legal profession is valueless and today's lawyers are "lost." Like the "lawyer-statesman" of Dean Anthony Kronman's work, *The Lost Lawyer*,<sup>2</sup> John Feerick is an embodiment of a very admirable prototype of the lawyer in society. The "lawyer-statesman" metaphor—not the "hired gun" metaphor—fits John Feerick; indeed, I like to think of John as a lawyer-dean-statesman that carries the "statesman" model to a different, and nowadays more apt role-model.

The lawyer-statesman idealized by Kronman is distinctive both internally and externally. Externally, he serves both private clients and the public interest. While these two roles are often played in sequence, there is a sense in which it is a dual role that is occupied at once, for the lawyer-statesman helps to resolve private conflicts in a manner that is at once workable for the public and tenable for the individual. Where he makes public and private goals mesh, and thereby resolves conflict, and where he displays the capacity to serve either or both, the lawyer-statesman displays the vital role we want lawyers to play in our society. And he does this, according to Kronman, by combining two strong capacities into a finely honed ability to sympathize with individual needs and feelings and vulnerabilities and perspectives, while nevertheless detaching from them so as to reach a point where a livable synthesis is possible.

Anyone who knows John Feerick as a person, a lawyer, or a dean, will recognize immediately that he beautifully illustrates the lawyer-statesman. Indeed, I would say that in today's world, something more

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1. Sanford Levinson, *Constitutional Faith* (1988).

2. Anthony T. Kronman, *The Lost Lawyer: Failing Ideals of the Legal Profession* (1993).

is required of the lawyer, and John possesses this too. That is a capacity not only to shift between individual needs and the state, but a capacity to build from within many concentric circles of community in-between; the firm he helped to build, the Bar, the alumni, the law school community, the City, and beyond the nation to international domains as well. Moreover, in our contemporary culture, one cannot do all of this building by presuming identities or shared cultural norms. Within limits, one must reach out to smaller and larger circles of community, in terms of their own sensibilities, values, and cultures. The lawyer-dean-statesman of today can use the breadth and pluralism of his communities to build strength, rather than to shake convictions. The strength of Fordham Law as a community, reaching locally, nationally, and internationally, is truly a testament to John Feerick, a marvelous example of the lawyer-dean-statesman. John is not a lost lawyer, but a lawyer's moral compass, pointing the way for lawyers to help build communities of candor, compassion, and integrity.

*Notes & Observations*