

REMARKS *by*
MR. CHIEF JUSTICE VINSON
at the DEDICATION OF THE
ANDREW W. MELLON MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN

May 9, 1952

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today we dedicate the Andrew W. Mellon Memorial Fountain, erected as a tribute from his friends. Pursuant to act of Congress, this fountain is appropriately located at the apex of the group of Government buildings along Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues in the planning and construction of which Mr. Mellon, as Secretary of the Treasury, played so large a part. We are further grateful to this planning for transforming the area eastward to the Capitol from an eyesore into a lovely vista.

More significantly, the fountain is located near the National Gallery of Art. Eleven years ago, Mr. Mellon gave to the people of the United States the magnificent building that we see before us, together with his own superb collection of painting and sculpture. Mr. Mellon guaranteed in advance that his donation of the finest possible gallery should be the beginning of a truly *national* gallery of art. At his request, his name does not appear except in connection with the works of art that he has given, as is done in the case of all donors who have given their treasures to the gallery. It was also provided by Mr. Mellon, and was written into statute by Congress, that the permanent collection of the gallery always be maintained at the same high standard of quality maintained in the Mellon collection. Congress, in accepting Mr. Mellon's gift to our people, pledged "the faith of the United States . . . for the upkeep of the National Gallery of Art." Of course, Congress has been prompt in the discharge of this obligation.

Largely because of these provisions, the founding of the National Gallery of Art has served as an invitation to other collectors of art. Mr. Kress, Mr. Widener, Mr. Dale, Mr. Rosenwald and many others have responded with magnificent gifts. Together with Mr. Mellon's collection, these gifts have provided the American people with one of the outstanding art galleries of the world.

As Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art, I can speak of the increasing usefulness and importance of this great institution which Mr. Mellon and others have provided for their country. In this work I am associated with Mr. Mellon's son, Mr. Paul Mellon, who, as one of the Gallery's trustees, is carrying on his father's tradition of public service, as is Mr. Mellon's daughter, Mrs. Bruce, who joins in this constant and generous support of the Gallery's activities.

Since its opening, more than twenty million visitors from all parts of the country have enjoyed the Gallery and its works of art. In this way, the American people have shown their appreciation of Mr. Mellon's gift—not only by enjoying the material splendor of the building and the collection, but more significantly through the inspiration which is received from truly great art.

In providing inspiration transcending tangible beauty, the National Gallery of Art has become a great institution. Mr. Mellon realized the importance of such intangible values. In the lobby of the Gallery, under the portrait of Mr. Mellon, is carved this apt statement: "[the story] of famous men . . . is not graven only on stone over their native earth, but lives on far away, without visible symbol, woven into the stuff of other men's lives." And, in accepting the National Gallery of Art and the Mellon collection on behalf of the people of the United States, President Roosevelt emphasized the fact that we were recipients of more than stone and glass, canvas and wood. The President spoke of Mr. Mellon's gift as a symbol "of our intention that the freedom of the human spirit shall go on."

And so today, looking back on eleven years of inspiration from the National Gallery of Art, and looking forward to its ever-increasing contribution to the Nation, we dedicate to Mr. Mellon a fountain that is a masterpiece among fountains both in engineering design and artistic proportion. Let us consider this fountain as another symbol of the inspiration and intangible values that have come to us through Mr. Mellon's contributions.