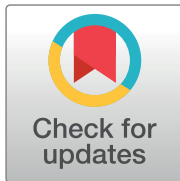




English Version



Versión Español



Crossmark



Citation: Guerrero VR. Reflections of doctor Vicente Borrero Restrepo upon receiving the Doctorate Honoris Causa. Colomb Méd (Cali), 2024; 55(2):e7005938 <http://doi.org/10.25100/cm.v55i2.5938>

Copyright: © 2024 Universidad del Valle



Corresponding Author:

Rodrigo Guerrero Velasco,
Universidad del Valle, Facultad de
Salud, Editor, Revista Colombia
Médica, Cali, Colombia. **e-mail:**
guerrerr@yahoo.com

Reflections of Doctor Vicente Borrero Restrepo on receiving the Doctorate Honoris Causa

Reflexiones del Médico Vicente Borrero Restrepo al recibir el Doctorado Honoris Causa

Rodrigo Guerrero Velasco 

Universidad del Valle, Facultad de Salud, Editor, Revista Colombia Médica, Cali, Colombia.



On February 23, 2024, during the Graduation Ceremony for Postgraduate Students, ICESI University awarded me the honorary degree of Doctor Honoris Causa in Administrative and Economic Sciences. At that moment, I shared some reflections and addressed the audience with words that several friends have kindly asked me to share.

Dr. Francisco Barberi, Chairman of the Board of ICESI University, and Esteban Piedrahita, President of ICESI University, dear friends who are receiving your postgraduate degrees today; ladies and gentlemen: Allow me to begin by recalling the year 1969, when, in mid-June, I returned to my homeland after completing my Master's and Doctorate studies at Harvard University. Despite the insistence that I remain in the United States, I always felt deeply rooted in my responsibility to contribute to the development of Colombia, my country. I firmly believe that underdevelopment, at its core, is a direct consequence of lack of access to education. This conviction is reflected in the history of Israel, a concrete example of how education can transform entire nations.

My return to Cali was marked by my appointment as Director of the Valle University Hospital, at the age of 28. This responsibility was not without challenges, particularly as I became the leader of my former professors. However, I remembered a valuable lesson I had learned from Pepón, the well-known cartoonist from El Tiempo newspaper: it is better to let our actions speak for themselves; there is no need to boast about them. This lesson has accompanied me throughout my career: 'Do not speak of your works; they will speak for you.'

I would like to take this moment to share with you two brief reflections: one of an institutional nature and the other of a personal nature. First, the Fundación Valle del Lili has gained

recognition as a highly complex healthcare institution, not only for its infrastructure and cutting-edge technology but primarily for the quality of its human resources. It is crucial to remember that machines and technology lack feelings, and the essence of medical care lies in the human aspect. A doctor attending to a mother with her sick child in an emergency room cannot delegate this care to a machine; he or she must handle differently the mother's feelings and the child's illness. Here, the fundamental sentiments of compassion, tenderness, and love emerge. A machine can never replace this.

This is the teaching we have instilled in our more than 8,000 employees, especially the institutional physicians and the hundreds of medical students currently practicing in the Hospital. This proclamation is summarized in a phrase I have left engraved to endure within the institution: 'At Fundación Valle del Lili, we do not treat diseases; we care for sick human beings.'

I would also like to share an additional experience related to this humanistic principle, which marked my time at Harvard University. It was my encounter with my professor, Dr. Thomas Weller. One day, I visited him in his office, and through a large painting and medal hanging on the wall, I realized that Dr. Thomas Weller had received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his research on tissue culture, which enabled the development of the polio vaccine—a breakthrough that profoundly impacted humanity. His demeanor left a deep impression on me. His humble approach to improving human life, rather than boasting about his achievements, taught me the importance of modesty and dedication in scientific and medical work.

On a more personal level, I would also like to share three fundamental principles that have guided my actions and decisions throughout my life, which can be summarized as follows: 'I feared God, I loved my family, and I served my country.'

On this day of celebration and recognition, I hope that each of you completing your postgraduate studies today will carry these words as inspiration and guidance in your professional and personal journeys.

Thank you