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Boston College Law School

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10/12/06—Boston College Law School’s kickoff event for the final year of its 75th Celebration was a great success, drawing an overflow crowd to the Law School’s East Wing room 120 to hear Judge Guido Calabresi deliver his presentation “What Does a Judge Do When the Law is Wrong?”

Calabresi, Judge from the United States Circuit Court of Appeals, Second Circuit, and former Yale Law School Dean, delivered a heartfelt and personal speech regarding how he deals with issues of law that might conflict with his personal faith. He gave capital punishment as an example, saying that although it was against his beliefs to sentence anyone to death, as a judge he was bound to follow the law. That did not, he said, preclude him from working hard to find an issue of law that would allow him to reconcile these differences.

BC Law Dean John H. Garvey called Calabresi “one of the most important figures in American law in the past half century,” saying his career as an academic had exceeded the most optimistic expectations. Garvey pointed out that Calabresi, along with Ronald Coase, an economist at the University of Chicago, introduced the idea of using economics to analyze the law governing nonmarket activities. Their articles were later given credit as the starting point for the movement called law and economics.

“[As a judge] he has been one of the most influential voices in the federal judiciary,” Garvey said. “It is an honor for the Law School to welcome him back to our campus to commemorate the 75th anniversary of our founding.”

Judge Calabresi was appointed United States Circuit Judge in July 1994. Prior to his appointment, he was Dean and Sterling Professor at Yale Law School, where he began teaching in 1959, and is now Sterling Professor Emeritus and Professorial Lecturer in Law.

Calabresi received his B.S. degree, summa cum laude, from Yale College in 1953, a B.A. degree with First Class Honors from Magdalene College, Oxford University, in 1955, an LL.B. degree, magna cum laude, in 1958 from Yale Law School, and an M.A. in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Oxford University in 1959. A Rhodes Scholar and member of Phi Beta Kappa and Order of the Coif, Calabresi served as the Note Editor of The Yale Law Journal, 1957-58, while graduating first in his law school class.

Following graduation, Calabresi clerked for Justice Hugo Black of the United States Supreme Court. He has been awarded some forty honorary degrees from universities in the United States and abroad, and is the author of four books and more than one hundred articles on law and related subjects.

Calabresi received the law school’s distinguished service award at the event.

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