

Appendix A

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

After an opening prayer offered by Dr. Ellen Leonard, the following words of welcome were given by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Galante of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, who was representing Archbishop Patrick Flores.

In the name of Archbishop Flores and in the name of all the people of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, I welcome you. We are grateful and pleased to have your presence among us.

I would like to tell you something about our Archdiocese. Upon completing graduate studies in Rome from 1965 to 1968, I returned to Philadelphia, where I was told that I was being "lent" to Brownsville, Texas, three hundred miles south of here. So I spent four years of my past life in South Texas. During those years, San Antonio was always the "mecca" for me. When I had a couple of days off I would come up here and buy books or see a movie, since we had no bookstores in Brownsville and only one movie theater.

And so I was delighted to come back to San Antonio because it is a wonderful and a unique city. It is regarded as one of the four unique cities in our country, along with New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans. And we're quite proud of our city. But we're especially proud of our Archdiocese and its people. Our Archdiocese is larger in territory than the state of West Virginia, and our ecclesiastical province is the largest in the United States, the third largest in the world. We have fourteen dioceses within our province here in the state of Texas. Alaska notwithstanding, Texas still does things bigger and better than everybody else!

Our Archdiocese was established in 1874, but there has been a Catholic presence here going back to the missions of the eighteenth century, which are still in existence. Four of them are here in the city and are still functioning parishes. Our cathedral is the oldest cathedral sanctuary in the United States, going back to 1738. The cathedral is very well known throughout the country, because many people watch the Sunday Mass broadcast there across the country.

We have roughly 750,000 Catholics here in the Archdiocese. In past years we've had a great influx of new immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The predominant ethnic group here is Mexican American—approximately seventy-five percent of the population. But the tapestry of our Archdiocese, filled with the richness and the beauty of the Mexican culture, is complemented by lovely strands of other cultures that have been here for many, many years. For example,

we have an area of our Archdiocese which was settled by Germans. And so we have towns like Fredericksburg which have deep German roots as do some of the churches here in San Antonio itself. German culture is very much a part of the fabric of the tapestry of our Archdiocese. We also have towns in our Archdiocese with names like St. Hedwigs and Cestohowa and Panna Maria, which is the oldest continuous Polish settlement in the United States. We have a strong presence of Czechs as well. We are also home to some of the newer immigrants. We have a Filipino community and a Vietnamese community which are just starting to take hold in the Archdiocese as distinct communities. And so we are an ethnically diverse religious family; we are rich in ethnic and cultural variety, and therefore, in religious practices and customs. And our Archdiocese is the better for the variety.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio is blessed with one hundred thirty-one parishes, nine high schools, and forty parish schools. But we also are fortunate to have three Catholic colleges and universities, as well as one school of theology, the Oblate School of Theology, and the very well-known Mexican American Cultural Center, which some of you know from the great work it does in language development and cultural enrichment for those who minister to Hispanics around the U.S. Assumption Seminary, a residence and formation house for our seminarians who attend the Oblate School of Theology, is also a very well appreciated around the country, with students from a variety of dioceses coming to imbibe and be informed by the Hispanic cultural setting of our Archdiocese. We also have a number of religious institutes here, with their formation houses and their generalates. Archbishop Flores has the distinction of being the first Mexican American bishop in the United States, appointed in 1970.

And how does theology influence the life of our Archdiocese? It does so in a very simple way. The whole sense of the incarnate Jesus who came to seek us, who came to us and did not wait for us to come to him, who came and shared our life, shared our culture, shared our experience, is very much the guiding impetus to the life of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, particularly to its ministerial life. For us the importance of theology in a very particular way is to shed light on that reality of Jesus so that as we come to know Jesus better and to see that Jesus who walks among us, who shares our life and our culture, we may grow in a greater and a stronger way in our mission of seeking out Jesus' brothers and sisters of all races and all cultures who make up the fabric of our Archdiocese.

Again, in the name of Archbishop Flores and in the name of all our people, *Bienvenido a nuestra ciudad y a nuestro diócesis. Y Dios les bendiga.*

†JOSEPH A. GALANTE
*Auxiliary Bishop
Archdiocese of San Antonio*