

## Appendix 3

### WELCOME ADDRESS

On behalf of the Church of Halifax, I am pleased to welcome all of you to our city. It has been some years since the Catholic Theological Society of America has met in Canada. It is, therefore, an honour to receive you once again in Canada and particularly in the Province of Nova Scotia. I hope you will do more than reflect theologically during your visit and I encourage you to explore a few of the attractions offered by this very historic city, not the least of which, is our Cathedral of St. Mary's.

This 64th annual assembly of theologians in our midst has provided me with the unique opportunity to say a few words of welcome, to comment briefly on the theme of this convention and its relevance for the life of our local churches in North America.

A quick glance at the titles and topics to be considered in these days of assembly, makes it abundantly clear that we live in a very complex church, where the variety of concerns and preoccupations are many; and where the diversity of subjects and content require skill, dedication and time, if they are to be dealt with seriously and with care.

This is what you as theologians are here to do—to bring clarity, insight, understanding and wisdom to the present faith experience which prevails in our church.

As I read the summaries of some of the papers which will be presented at this convention, I recognized the many issues which affect the lives of our faithful, the lives of the priests and lay ministers and I certainly resonated with some of the questions and challenges affecting my life as a bishop.

I recognized in the theme “Impasse... and Beyond” the dilemma and the daily struggle to be faithful to the gospel and to the church. There are days, in my life and ministry, as I'm sure there are in yours, when *impassibility* seems to dominate one's attention and deplete one's energies as one attempts to face confusion and division; fear and anger; frustration and discouragement. In such circumstances, I recognize the temptation to conclude that death has prevailed. And in such circumstances, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus did, all one wants to do is to get out of town.

However, our faith in God, reminds us that nothing is impossible to God, not even the experience of impasse. Our commitment to Jesus Christ and to his church, tells us that beyond death there is Resurrection.

Your task as theologians and your present gathering especially is to see how resurrection hope can be shaped, formed and proposed—so that our present

experience of faith can be better understood and today's disciples of Christ encouraged to see the Lord. By your questioning, by your suggestions and counsel, you put before all of us possible ways of getting beyond the paralysis and immobility of our apparent dead-ends.

What surprises does God have in store for us beyond impasse?

As a bishop, trying to exercise some leadership and responsibility for those entrusted to my care, I walk a daily tightrope, trying to maintain a balance from falling into the illusions of the past or into the mirages of the future. This is done by promoting the pastoral care of God's people, which can only take place in the present—where the priorities are dictated by people's need for healing, guidance, nurturing and reconciliation.

Between “Impasse...and Beyond” there is the reality of the present and perhaps that is the point reflected in the convention's theme by the three dots which separate or which bridge the past and the future. Perhaps, those three dots represent the mission which we all share to teach, to sanctify, and to serve.

May your time here be prayerfully significant, theologically productive, and pastorally useful. May the whole church in North America be encouraged by your dedicated work—and may all that we do be for the greater glory of God.

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