

## **Appendix 3**

### **WELCOME ADDRESS**

Good evening, everyone. My name is Bishop Richard Lennon, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Diocese of Cleveland.

#### I.

Let me tell you a little about Cleveland, so that you may have a feel for where you'll be spending your time for the next few days. Cleveland was founded in 1796 by Moses Cleaveland down in the area called "The Flats," where the Cuyahoga River meets Lake Erie. The Greater Cleveland metropolitan area now consists of some 114 municipalities that surround the city. 1.6 million people reside in this area.

Once a heavy-industry economic powerhouse, Cleveland has experienced a decline in manufacturing, along with so many other cities in the Great Lakes region. Nevertheless, Cleveland hosts several institutions that are truly noteworthy in the areas of medicine and law. Both the Cleveland Clinic and the University Hospital Systems are world renowned for the quality of their medical care in several different fields. We are also blessed with four outstanding Catholic hospitals. Cleveland's law firms and courts were among the first to devise and adopt modern Alternative Dispute Resolution procedures to handle cases without which the judicial system would be overloaded.

Cleveland also provides an excellent cultural atmosphere. There are a number of very fine museums in the City. In fact, I would encourage you to visit the Cleveland Museum of Art, which stays open until 9:00 p.m. on Friday evenings during your free time tomorrow.

#### II.

Now let me tell you a little about our Diocese. Bishop Amadeus Rappe was appointed the first Bishop of Cleveland in 1847. I am the 10th bishop of Cleveland, appointed just four years ago. 735,000 Catholics reside in the Diocese of Cleveland. Like so many other dioceses, Cleveland has experienced a shifting Catholic population. We are now in the final stages of closing 28 parishes and creating 17 new parishes, as two or three, or in one case, four parishes come together forming new parishes by being merged together. As can be expected, for many this has been a

stressful experience—but one which the vast majority of parishioners have accepted with dignity and grace. By the end of the process in July, we will have 174 parishes; down from the 225 parishes we had two years ago.

The Diocese has long valued its commitment to social justice and social outreach. Our Diocesan Catholic Charities constitutes one of the largest Catholic diocesan health and human services operations in the world—last year serving more than 325,000 needy individuals. The good people of this Diocese also give extraordinary support to other efforts besides their support of Catholic Charities, from Catholic Relief Services to local homeless shelters.

Our commitment to Catholic education in this Diocese remains strong with the sixth largest number of students in Catholic schools among all the dioceses in our country. These schools, both elementary and high schools, all strive to provide excellent education and a faith-filled formation for the young people attending them. The faithful of the Diocese of Cleveland have embraced the mission of the Church on behalf of people by providing wonderful schools attended by Catholics and non-Catholics and responsive social outreach to those in need.

### III.

In fact, we are all here this evening because of our love for the Church and the Church's mission. Our faith has come to us through the church, and I am sure there is not one of us who does not desire to pass that faith on to those who will live it long after we die. In today's world, this involves theology more than ever. I recall the observation by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger who wrote, “. . . a church without theology impoverishes and blinds, while a churchless theology melts away into caprice.”<sup>1</sup> A Church without theology would be blind indeed. To a large extent, theologians help give us a vision that may penetrate to the heart of the matter. In a world that is often given to caprice, theologians may confidently draw on the Church's Tradition to formulate a prophetic message the world needs to hear.

As you well know, all this takes a good deal of research and thought. I thank you for the times that you have enhanced my ministry and all those who engage in pastoral ministry by providing the insights that you offer. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the theological faculties of the Diocese, St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology, John Carroll University, Ursuline College, and Notre Dame College for the contributions they have made and continue to make to the life of our local Church.

Of course, your task reaches far beyond catechetics. The Church needs you to reach for new, profound and compelling statements of the faith of the Church. These may bring new clarity, understanding and appreciation of the profound mystery that permeates our lives each day. May you express the faith in ways that

---

<sup>1</sup>Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding Its Role in the Light of Present Controversy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 48.

will capture the imagination of new generations. May the innate beauty of our Faith shine forth through your efforts for all to embrace.

IV.

Let me leave you with a thought from John Henry Newman. In commenting about discussions concerning various theological proofs and arguments, he wrote: “As for truly religious minds, they . . . are sure to turn inquiry into mediation, exhortation into worship and . . . [discussion] into teaching.”<sup>2</sup>

It is my fervent prayer that, during these next few days, you may engage in the discipline of theology well, so that your thought may not only be a contribution to the academy, but that it may truly enrich the Church in her prayer, in her witness and most of all in her faith.

Thank you for all that you do for the Church.

Welcome to Cleveland and may you have a good convention.

BISHOP RICHARD G. LENNON  
*Bishop of Cleveland*  
*Cleveland, Ohio*

---

<sup>2</sup>John Henry Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 1719. The ellipsis deletes Newman’s “argument.” I have replaced it with the word “discussion” because it more nearly conveys in modern English what Newman intended.