

APPENDIX

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

Thank you for this opportunity to welcome you to Washington.

This local Church is unique in that it benefits from the continuing presence of a number of theologians who live here and work in our universities, faculties and houses of studies. Their work truly enriches our ecclesial life. It is a great pleasure to welcome their colleagues in the Catholic Theological Society of America.

The theme you have chosen for this year's convention, "The Divine and the Human in Christianity," certainly captures the main concerns of contemporary theological studies. In a way, it is perhaps the crucial issue of theology today, especially in the area of methodology and hermeneutics. It is thus a fundamental question in all branches of theology, prior to considerations of content. Your program for this convention confirms that you are aware of the many ramifications of this theme. You will be discussing the wonder of divine revelation, its impact on anthropology, its summit in christology, its continuation in the life of the Church, and its expression in Christian behavior. By gathering here in the name of the Lord, we can be confident that his divine light will guide your search.

In addition to these customary words of welcome, allow me to share with you briefly the following thoughts concerning your work in this time of opportunity for the Church.

The current period of cultural transition has given rise to a great variety of philosophical outlooks or "languages of the mind." Moreover, our times are characterized by a proliferation of scientific disciplines and specialized fields of intellectual activity. These have an inescapable impact on theological thought. Theologians are on the front lines of the Church's effort to understand better and proclaim the gospel to men and women in this kind of pluralistic world.

In my opinion, such a position requires certain intellectual and personal attitudes which will largely determine the quality of a theologian's contribution to the mission of the Church. Permit me to suggest two of these to you.

First: a great temptation for theologians in our intellectual world is to borrow results from the human sciences without re-

specting the necessary limitations imposed by the differences in the phenomena which they study. In the past it was the physical sciences that tempted theologians to apply their models, principles, and laws to spiritual realities which can never be described by the parameters of these sciences. History confirms the crippling effects which this kind of undisciplined intellectual behavior has on both theology and science. (Theologians, by the way, are certainly not the only ones tempted in this manner. It is fascinating to read of scientists who fell into the same intellectual trap.) Today it is perhaps the behavioral sciences which tempt us the most. Certainly a theologian has to use the insights of these sciences. My point is that this should be done by those who are professionally competent in these fields. Anything else is not only intellectually dishonest; it is harmful to the Church. (One of the great contributions a Catholic University can make is to foster interdisciplinary dialogue between theologians and scholars.)

Second: since theology deals with holy things, a certain reverence is called for in the attitude of the theologian. The ability for theological reflection, like all other charisms, is given "for the common good" (cf. 1 Cor 12:7), that is, for the good of the Church. The theologian must thus be a believer with a heightened ecclesial consciousness. Moreover, because of the unavoidable tentativeness of much of theological reflection in a culturally transitional age such as ours, the theologian should take to heart the instruction of St. Paul to those Corinthians who were the occasion for dismay for some of the faithful:

For me there are no forbidden things; maybe, but not everything does good . . . it is not everything that helps the building to grow. . . . Never do anything offensive to anyone—to Jews or Greeks or to the Church of God; just as I try to be helpful to everyone at all times, not anxious for my own advantage but for the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved (1 Cor 10:23-33).

Accept these two observations as the concerns of a bishop who has a deep appreciation for your work and a great confidence that it will bring about, with God's grace, a strengthening of faith, hope, and charity in the hearts of those who know Jesus as the Savior and Lord.

May he bless and sustain you.

†WILLIAM CARDINAL BAUM
Archbishop of Washington