

Appendix A

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

The following address was read by the Rev. Edward C. Dillon, J.C.D., Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Atlanta.

My sisters, and brothers,

As the newly appointed archbishop of Atlanta, it is my privilege to welcome you all to this convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America. I do this in solidarity with all the American bishops, who time and time again have benefited from the exploration and deliberation that goes on within your organization. In particular, for a diocese such as Atlanta, where dynamic and unprecedented growth is the order of the day, it is necessary that everything we do to help the Church grow is founded on the bedrock of tradition and expertise.

We all know that if we are to be indeed disciples of the Lord, then we must be communicators of His truth. Since the bishops are charged with the teaching apostolate, it follows then that among their first colleagues in this holy undertaking stand the theologians, who assist the bishops and their priests in the undiluted and clear dissemination of that truth.

In the recent "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian," issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith over the signature of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, we read:

Theology has importance for the Church in every age so that it can respond to the plan of God "who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). In times of great spiritual and cultural change, theology is all the more important. Yet it also is exposed to risks since it must strive to "abide" in the truth (cf. Jn 8:31), while at the same time taking into account the new problems which confront the human spirit. In our century, in particular, during the periods of preparation for and implementation of the Second Vatican Council, theology contributed much to a deeper "understanding of the realities and the words handed on" (*Dei Verbum*, n.8). But it also experienced and continues to experience moments of crisis and tension.

My brothers and sisters, crisis and tension are at the heart of true growth, and distinguish true growth from mere expansion. The harnessing of these human and internal forces, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will always result in that art of theology which has so well served the missionary spirit of the Church in the past, and will continue to serve her as we scout out and follow the "narrow but safe path" which leads us to heaven on high.

At this forty-sixth annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society, you will have the opportunity to hear and discuss thoughts and opinions on a wide variety of subjects. Also, in honor of the one-hundredth anniversary of Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, it has been the special task of the organizers to emphasize the scope and intellectual integration of the Church's social teaching, and the vital impact of intellectual inquiry on this process of integration.

In his most recent encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, our Holy Father has honored the memory and impact of that great work of Pope Leo XIII, and he has underscored what will be our efforts to appreciate the social teaching of the Church, as well as other aspects and trends of current, orthodox theology. I quote from the introduction to the encyclical:

Among the things which become "old" as a result of being incorporated into Tradition, and which offer opportunities and material for enriching both Tradition and the life of faith, there is the fruitful activity of many millions of people, who, spurred on by the social Magisterium, have sought to make that teaching the inspiration for their involvement in the world. Acting either as individuals or joined together in various groups, associations, and organizations, these people represent a great movement for the defence of the human person and the safeguarding of human dignity. Amid changing historical circumstances, this movement has contributed to the building up of a more just society or at least to the curbing of injustice. (*Centesimus Annus*, n.3)

My friends, it is my earnest desire and prayer, that as a result of these deliberations, we will all increase the relationship of trust that has for centuries marked the fellowship enjoyed between the bishops of the Church, and the Church's faithful theologians. By these undertakings we all become better servants of the Word and of the People of God. May the Holy Spirit preserve us in the doctrine of truth and freedom, and may we all know His fervor, from day to day, for the rest of our lives.

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