

## Appendix B

### CONVENTION LITURGY

*The following remarks and homily were offered by Walter Principe, c.s.b., the president at the convention liturgy, held at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Atlanta on Thursday afternoon, June 13, 1991.*

#### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The theme of our eucharist, which includes a memorial of St. Anthony of Padua, is reconciliation. As we planned our cycle of convention cities, we chose Atlanta in order to take account of its ambiance and significance to the African-American community and to make us aware of the need for continuing reconciliation among us.

(1) Atlanta is the site of the first and second African-American archbishops, Eugene Marino and James P. Lyke; (2) Atlanta has been the site of African-American political leadership in its election of African-American mayors; (3) it has been the site of moral and theological leadership in the person of Martin Luther King, Jr.; (4) Atlanta is the headquarters of the Glenmary Home Missionaries—a group that takes seriously the Second Vatican Council's proclamation that the church is missionary by nature, so that every local church must be missionary.

Atlanta is also a rapidly growing city. But such growth uses vast amounts of material resources, a fact that reminds us that we need to be in harmony and to be reconciled with the whole of material creation. With this in mind, we shall be using Marty Haugen's "Mass of Creation."

Our theme of reconciliation will sound out in the responsorial psalm, with its call for truth and kindness to meet, for peace and righteousness to kiss. The readings will recall our need to be transformed by the Spirit in true freedom and by deeper virtue if we are to be ministers of reconciliation.

#### HOMILY

In this eucharist, whose theme is reconciliation, as always we remember and thank God for reconciliation through the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today we also remember and thank God for the graces—including graces of reconciliation—bestowed on the People of God through the holy teacher, preacher, and doctor of the Church, St. Anthony of Padua. The wonderful deeds of God, for which we give thanks in Eucharist, continue for the People of God within the contingencies of free human history. Today we recall one moment of

that history, the life and ministry of this early Franciscan theologian and mystic, who lived for only 36 years between 1195 and 1231.

Perhaps, even for us theologians, the name of St. Anthony of Padua evokes the image of someone who helps to find lost objects, or of someone who arouses fervent popular devotion, especially among his own Portuguese people or his adopted Italian compatriots. Perhaps we are reminded of the statues we have seen of a sweet, pious friar holding the baby Jesus. Perhaps we wondered when in 1946 Pope Pius XII confirmed the long Franciscan veneration of Anthony within the Order as a doctor of the Church by extending his title as doctor to the entire Church. But in the fourteenth century Giovanni da Milano remembered him as a great teacher of theological wisdom by depicting him (in a fresco in the church of Santa Croce in Florence) holding the book of scriptures open to the book of Wisdom at the place where the author prays for wisdom and understanding. And in the sixteenth century Berto di Giovanni recalled his success as a preacher by portraying him (in a painting in the Pinacoteca of Perugia) in the act of vigorously proclaiming the Word of God.

Although the thirteenth century was an age of imposing theological compositions, we have, it is true, no great summa or commentary from St. Anthony. But we do have his collection of sermons, a partial but valuable witness to his learning and eloquence. For Anthony was indeed a gifted theologian: in his native Portugal he studied scripture and theology at Coimbra, one of the leading theological schools of the Iberian peninsula. After joining the Franciscans at the age of twenty-five, he arrived by accident in Italy through being shipwrecked on the Sicilian coast.

At first, it seems that, like many a stranger in a foreign land, he was ignored or neglected, his gifts unrecognized. (Think of the treatment given the African-Americans brought here forcefully or of those who came to North America as immigrants.) It was only when Anthony preached an unexpectedly brilliant sermon that his Franciscan brothers recognized his talents. This quickly led him to important roles in his Order, to his preaching widely in Italy and France, and to service for the papacy, ministries that were remarkable for the wonders accomplished. St. Francis of Assisi, recognizing both his brilliance and his holiness, appointed him the first official theology teacher for the young Franciscan Order. Francis wrote a short note to Anthony saying, "To brother Antonio, my overseer, greetings from brother Francesco. I am happy to have you teaching theology to the brothers because when you do so, you do not extinguish in them the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, as is written in the Rule."

Added to Anthony's theological teaching was his increasingly intense ministry of preaching. In great part it was a ministry of reconciliation—reconciliation for Catholics whom he moved by his words to receive in themselves the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, reconciliation for those in France and Italy who had drifted from the Church or who had deliberately rejected the Church under the influence of heretical teachings. In his later years he was called upon to try to achieve reconciliation among the bellicose temporal rulers of Italy, to bring about their mutual forgiveness and peace. Worn out by his zealous ministry, he died at the age of thirty-six.

In our day we are beginning to realize that we need reconciliation not only with God and with one another but also with the whole of creation, including the ma-

terial creation. Anthony was a follower of the poor man of Assisi, Francis, whose great canticle of the creatures praised God through sun and moon, earth and water, air and fire, indeed through all the elements seen as sisters and brothers. In one of Anthony's own sermons, he said:

If the beauty of creation is so great, how great then must be the beauty of the Creator. The wisdom of the Creator shines forth from all these works. Everything we perceive in the world of sense makes us aware that they are the works of God's hands (cf. Ps 111:7), those hands pierced on the cross, hands with which Christ wrestled the devil on the cross and snatched us from the hands of the devil. (*Sermon for the Second Sunday of Advent*)

I have said that Anthony was also a mystic. Yes, despite his intense activity, he withdrew regularly into solitude for periods of recollection and prayer, and was favored with graces of mystical contemplation. This part of his character shines through the sermons we have from him—they set forth a mystical doctrine that has been praised for its depth, for avoiding accidental phenomena, and for concentrating on the heart of mystical life, loving experiential contemplation of God.

This mystical side of Anthony can be linked with today's profound although difficult reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians. Paul is justifying his ministry, a ministry of preaching Christian freedom from law. By contrast with those whose minds are veiled from seeing this freedom given us in Christ, we, Paul says, have the freedom of the Spirit of the Lord. He then adds: "All of us [not just the chosen Moses], gazing on the Lord's glory with unveiled faces, are being transformed into God's very image from one degree of splendor to another by the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). The exegete, André Feuillet, concludes a long study of this passage by saying that at this point its basic idea is the following: "The more we contemplate an object, the more we become like it. So the Christian who remains gazing at the glory of the Lord in the mirror of Christ is, little by little, transformed by this vision." And he adds: "Nothing more beautiful than this has ever been written in praise of contemplation."

Do not Paul's inspired words and the example of the inspired St. Anthony invite us to a contemplative "gaze on the Lord's glory in the mirror of Christ" as the source of our theological wisdom and the font of our being "transformed into God's very image from one degree of splendor to another"? Anthony's confrere, Bonaventure, was to remind theologians that in their study they should seek what St. Francis found on Mount Alverno, an *incendium mentis*, an inflaming of the mind with love. Marie-Dominique Chenu, commenting on Thomas Aquinas's notion of theology, declared that for theology to be a science, it must begin by being a mysticism, that is, the theologian must begin from a contemplative gazing on God through living, loving faith in which the theologian receives the first principles needed to develop theological science. And Thomas Aquinas himself once said: "A mission [or new sending] of the Word to us [by the Father] does not take place in every knowledge we acquire, but only in that knowledge which bursts forth in affections of love," that is, when in us as in God "the Word spirates Love."

Such a prayerful atmosphere for our study and teaching—like Anthony's, "not extinguishing the spirit of holy prayer and devotion"—will give us that deeper virtue Jesus speaks of in the Gospel. It will help us to avoid the undue anger Jesus condemns, for if there can be a justified anger in the face of contradiction or

repression of our legitimate Christian freedom, it could become excessive and so distort the good we seek to accomplish. In our ministry as theologians, such a prayerful atmosphere will give us that spirit of freedom in Christ and the Spirit that Paul speaks about. It will make us worthy ministers of reconciliation for the concerned people of our times who need us theologians to mediate between the Gospel and their cultural experiences. In the Eucharist we now continue, let us direct our contemplative gaze upon the glory of the Lord in the mirror of Christ; let us pray that by our ministry as theologians "truth and kindness will meet, peace and righteousness will kiss."