

Appendix A

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

The following words of welcome were delivered by Archbishop William H. Keeler at the John Courtney Murray banquet.

It is good to be able to greet you on the occasion of your convention. I am grateful that, during your visit here in Baltimore, you are able to worship in our Basilica of the Assumption, our nation's first metropolitan cathedral and the most historic Catholic church in the land.

A few blocks from the Basilica is another historic church many of you have visited, St. Mary's on Paca Street.

To those attending the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa, I mention one very closely associated with this church, Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange. As far as we can determine, she was a native of Haiti who came by way of Cuba to this city early in the last century. In 1829 she founded here the first community of religious women of African descent anywhere in the world. She established that community to teach African-American children about Jesus—the theme of your convention.

It reminds me of something that many of you remember—perhaps are even reminded of here—that Karl Rahner said in an interview shortly before he died: "Jesus Christ is not just any old ideal figure among human beings, such as Socrates, Buddha, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Mother Teresa; rather, he is the ultimate, irrevocable self-expression of God to the human race in history" (*Faith in a Wintry Season*, 107). During this tenth anniversary of his death—he died almost exactly ten years ago, on March 30, 1984—it seems appropriate to invoke the name and words of this great theologian in this company of theologians who, I know, revere his memory. Rahner's theological and spiritual writings are suffused by an acute awareness of the centrality of a strong christological faith to Catholic life and theology. His own life bore witness to this faith.

The Church relies upon and welcomes the thought and witness of theologians like Karl Rahner. In these modest words of greeting, I assure you of the deep gratitude of the Church for your scholarly work and for all you do to cultivate and to deepen the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Rahner made a particularly striking remark about the urgency of this knowledge when he said, "In Jesus, the Crucified and Risen One, I know whereof I should live and die" (*ibid.*, 29).

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