

Appendix A

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

When I travel, people often ask me, "How are things in San Francisco?" And after telling them that it is flourishing under my wise rule, I tell them that there is never a dull moment here.

That also seems to me to describe the theological landscape today, never a dull moment. The debate over the Roman Catechism, over the projected document on Catholic universities, Michael Buckley's substantive work on the origins of contemporary atheism, the intense and complex discussion over nutrition and hydration—these and so many other quality efforts bespeak a state of theology very much alive and importantly at the service of the Church.

As a bishop, my service to the Church exacts concern for and involvement in many and manifold affairs as diverse as meetings with Mexican workers and American ranch owners, studying and approving policies for the seminary on the admission of candidates, visiting the sick, preparing homilies and addresses, celebrating the sacraments of salvation, helping hurting priests find the path to healing. I once cherished the youthful hope that I might someday make some significant contribution to theology. Providence has prepared another path for me. Those earlier ambitions only serve to make me treasure and value your work more and to deepen my appreciation for the indispensable service your scholarship is to the Church.

There are only two thoughts that come to me tonight about your work.

First, it would be a great loss to dig the well and not to drink the water. Your work is such a signal service to the Church. It should also be a service to yourselves. When you undertake the theological enterprise, you take into your hands the Word of God and the precious gift of Divine Revelation. It is a sacred work done for a sacred purpose. In the very doing of it your own faith should deepen, your hope grow brighter, your following of Jesus more ardent. Theology, I believe, should impart new depths to your own discipleship. Theology and holiness should be a twin quest.

Second, while I see clearly that theology should illuminate the human and spiritual journey, should probe uncharted waters and walk where there are sometimes no paths, I believe that it should also contribute to what Paul calls "peace in believing." I believe there is a definite place for theology to contribute "peace in believing" to the faithful of Christ, to priests and to bishops. While it is good at times for all of us to be shaken out of our complacency and to have to gird ourselves for unanticipated journeys, to respond to new questions and new needs, there is also a necessary place for peace in the possession of faith, for peace in the understanding of faith, for peaceful conviction in believing.

With these simple thoughts, I welcome you to San Francisco. President Gorbachev on Monday said that the people of San Francisco should be taxed just for living in such beauty. But I take special delight in what former Mayor LaGuardia of New York once said on a visit here: "God took the beauty of the Bay of Naples, the Valley of the Nile, the Swiss Alps, the Hudson River Valley, rolled them into one, and made San Francisco."

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