

Appendix A

ADDRESS OF WELCOME

To all the members of the Catholic Theological Society of America gathered for the forty-seventh annual convention, it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you to Pittsburgh. As a member of CTSA, I take particular pride in greeting you on behalf of the Church of Pittsburgh as you begin your sessions and deliberations in our home.

My welcome is all the more warm because of the particular promise that the theological enterprise in general and the Catholic Theological Society of America in particular holds for the Church today. Several recent documents of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops prepared by the Committee on Doctrine, on which it has been my privilege to serve, speak to the issue of the theological enterprise, its importance, and its gift to the Church. We are all familiar with *Doctrinal Responsibilities: Approaches to Promoting Cooperation and Resolving Misunderstandings between Bishops and Theologians* and *The Teaching Ministry of the Diocesan Bishops: A Pastoral Reflection*, published respectively in 1989 and 1991 by the bishops, and the fact that they contain considerable reflection on the role and contribution of theologians today.

The considerations contained in those documents reflect the long-standing appreciation of the role of theology in the ongoing life of the Church, as witnessed in the writings of the Church Fathers and Doctors over centuries, in the great theological tradition of the Church, and, closer to our own time, in the theological renewal of which the Second Vatican Council was such a patron.

Your chosen theme, "'Experience' and Theology: A Critical Appropriation," is all the more welcome because it is so timely. There is almost an irony to the recognition that in the midst of the forceful secular challenge to spiritual values that is a hallmark of our age there is also a powerful and recognized spiritual renewal and concerted redirection of focus on the part of many to the whole spiritual dimension of human existence. In theological terms, the issue is in part reflected in the discussion on the relationship of human experience to the ultimate transcendent reality—God.

Last Sunday at the Civic Arena, directly across the street from this gathering, more than 18,000 people of the National Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference gathered, and we celebrated three days of prayer, proclamation, and discernment in the Spirit, aware that Pentecost continues in our day.

Your attention to the spiritual dimension of life mirrors what is taking place all around us. I am convinced from what I hear and learn from those with whom I meet every day, both within and outside our faith family, that a real and true

thirst for the things of the Spirit exists in our day. Every segment of our society, with few exceptions, seems to recognize, whether in an articulated manner or not, that we do not live by bread alone. We need the Spirit and the hope that the Spirit brings. For too long, too many have accepted the secular gospel that "It doesn't get any better than this." The very addiction of our society to chemicals, fads, and self-indulgence challenges us to look more closely at the ultimate meaning of life. Perhaps we are recognizing the human phenomenon that St. Augustine described more than fifteen hundred years ago: "You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (*Confessions*, 1.1.1, PL 32.661)

Looking around, I see many signs, particularly in the faces of the young men and women who in such increasing numbers are returning to the sacraments, that the needs of the human spirit cry out to be met. In spite of all the noise around us, noise from all the loud voices competing for the allegiance of human hearts, noise raised by every sector of our secular world, the quiet and soft voice of the Spirit has not been stilled. It continues to speak to human hearts. Not by bread alone do we live!

As believers, our hope for a better world is rooted in our faith that God will help us make this happen, hence our perennial optimism . . . and the source of our social activism and involvement. God will be with us to bring about the world of peace, justice, understanding, wisdom, kindness, respect, and love that we call the kingdom of God.

The revelation by God of the mystery of God-with-us is not incidental to the human experience. It gives life and light and direction to the struggle we call the human condition and the reality we call human experience. Your theme, "'Experience' and Theology: A Critical Appropriation," challenges us as we do our theological reflection and pastoral ministry. We look to you to continue to help us as we try to relate the proclamation of the received teaching to our ongoing pastoral experiences and to do so in a way that speaks to our culture.

In a local and, therefore, limited way we attempt to address the appropriation that is the theme of this convention as we strive to bring together the lived experiences of the Church in all its members with our theological reflections on the received teaching. Our local resources include our theologians, particularly at the institutions of higher learning within this diocese, especially Duquesne University, Carlow College, La Roche College, and Saint Paul Seminary, and the members of the religious communities that enrich this Church, together with our own diocesan pastoral enterprise.

As we welcome you to Pittsburgh, we rejoice in the contributions that the theologians of this area regularly make to the ongoing life of this local Church. Our Diocesan Theological Commission, whose membership represents various theological disciplines, is actively engaged in helping to formulate pastoral responses. The cooperation between the universities and colleges and the pastoral efforts of this local Church highlights the level of positive interaction. On the

level of information dissemination, the cooperation of the theological community with the diocese in a variety of media efforts offers our people access to the ongoing discussion relative to a host of pastoral issues.

Together with the local theological community and in my own name, I renew my enthusiastic welcome to you and prayer with you that God will bless your efforts—our efforts—to better serve the Church through this forty-seventh annual convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

†DONALD W. WUERL
Bishop of Pittsburgh