

## REMARKS OF WELCOME

*The Catholic Theological Society of America*

by Bishop Robert H. Brom

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During my first *Ad Limina* visit, Pope John Paul, after questions of a more pastoral nature, surprised me by asking, "Now, what advice do you have for the Pope? Personally?" After thinking a bit but not very long, I responded: "No matter how many problems you have to address, no matter how difficult they might be, live the *mystery* of faith. In the world, in the Church, in the trenches," I said, "we need the inspiration of mystery-centered leadership."

After a moment of what I call "the Polish grimace," the Holy Father replied: "Good advice for the Pope and good advice for you, too. Tell it to everyone?" And so I have, especially in pastoral visits, and even to Church groups gathering in San Diego. Somehow, San Diego is an attractive gathering place.

As you might well imagine, and as I am sure would be the case with any one of you, I don't always agree with the opinions, the agendas, the presenters, various positions of one kind or another, or the espoused causes of those who meet in San Diego: liturgists, evangelists, catechists, theologians and canon lawyers, priests, bishops too, and many others.

However, I am always pleased to welcome Church groups who assemble here because of our common faith, as I am happy to welcome you tonight, with the challenge to keep before you the mystery of faith—the mystery of *communion* and *mission* in the Spirit of Jesus.

This is quite in tune with your emphasis on the Holy Spirit in this, your fifty-first annual convention.

In whatever our deliberations, in our agreements and disagreements, in our manner of assenting and dissenting, because together we hold to the *mystery of faith*, we will seek above all never to diminish our *communion*, only deepen it, never to jeopardize our *mission*, only better accomplish it.

Anointed in the spirit of Jesus, we will seek to be like him: humble servants of truth, love, and mercy to the glory of God and for the salvation of the world.

This vocation of all who would be saints seems particularly difficult these days for all in Church leadership; from my perspective, I would say *bishops* and from yours, you might say *theologians*. Somehow, to follow Christ and to be radically Christian seems less difficult, certainly less complicated, for those who are able to live a more simple life. But, no doubt, they have their temptations and troubles, too.

San Diego (from St. Didacus in Latin) was a faithful, humble, and simple disciple of the Lord. He responded with all his heart to the grace and calling which we now receive in the gift of the Holy Spirit—to know, to proclaim, and to live the *mystery of faith*.

Diego was born to Spanish parents about 1400. As a Franciscan brother, he was a selfless servant of the poor and known to heal the sick with the sign of the Cross. He found inspiration and strength in his special devotion to Christ in his passion. Diego died in 1463 pressing a crucifix to himself and repeating the words of the Good Friday chant: "Dulce lignum, dulce ferrum, dulce pondus sustinet" (Precious the wood, precious the nails, precious the weight they bear). He was canonized in 1588.

The name, San Diego, was given to this locality by Spanish explorers in 1602. Mission San Diego de Alcalá was founded by Junipero Serra on July 16, 1769. It is the first of twenty-one California missions which mark sowing the seeds of faith in the far West.

I hope and pray that through the intercession of San Diego your days and discussions here, in the city and diocese named after him, will be a blessing for you and for the Church.