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Preface

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PREFACE

The Fiftieth Annual Meeting of The Mariological Society of America

The fiftieth anniversary meeting of the Mariological Society of America took place where it all began—in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, in the shadow of the Basilica Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. We were fortunate to have the sessions and accommodations in the newly-renovated quarters of the Theological College, located across Michigan Avenue from the shrine. In accord with the wishes of the Fiftieth Anniversary Planning Committee, an additional day was added to the ordinary length of the Society's meeting (Tuesday, May 25, 1999, to Friday, May 28, 1999), to allow time to recognize all who have brought the Society to this point, to review the record of the Society's contributions during the past fifty years, and to continue the Society's purpose of studying God's blessings, especially those bestowed on the Virgin Mary. Appropriately, the central theme for this extended meeting of the Mariological Society was *Magnificat: Gratitude and Praise*.

The opening service, on Tuesday evening, May 26, 1999, commemorated the learning, devotion, and persistence evident in the nearly five-hundred articles of *Marian Studies*—all of which were originally conferences delivered at the Society's meetings. Part of the evening's program was a review—in a prayerful litany—of these articles and themes of the conferences of the past fifty years. We were happy to have in attendance two members who participated in the first meeting of the Society, signed the newly-adopted Constitution on January 3, 1950, and who were designated "charter members" of the Society: Fr. Roger M. Charest, S.M.M., and Fr. James M. Flanagan. A program containing notes on the founding of the

Society, membership records, long-time members, and recipients of the Cardinal Wright Mariological Award, together with the summary list of the articles for *Marian Studies*, 1950-1998, was distributed.

The presentations on Wednesday morning May 27, 1999, reviewed the developments which occurred both in the Church and in Mariology in the past half-century and the ways in which the Society's meetings have reflected those changes. The session on Wednesday morning began with a survey by Fr. Eamon Carroll, O.Carm., of the "evolution" in Mariology. This was followed by the secretary's summary of developments within the Society, drawn largely from the topics treated at the meetings and in the presidential addresses. Next, panelists presented a survey and commentary of the articles which appeared in *Marian Studies* based on four topics: Bible (Fr. Bert Buby, S.M.), doctrine (Fr. Johann Roten, S.M.), liturgy (Fr. Thomas A. Thompson, S.M.), ecumenism (Fr. Frederick Jelly, O.P.). On the afternoon of the first day, individuals who had recently presented dissertations in Marian theology (Dr. Ronald Novotny and Fr. Arthur Mastrolia) or who were currently working on the dissertation (Mrs. Gloria Dodd, Mr. James Bell) presented summaries of their work.

The second day of the meeting, Thursday, May 27, 1999, was entirely devoted to the study of the Magnificat, which included four major presentations. Fr. Aristide Serra, O.S.M., Professor of Sacred Scripture from the Marianum in Rome and noted for his studies on the context of Scriptural passages related to the Virgin Mary, presented a study of two concepts central to the Magnificat: "poverty" (lowliness) and the "great deeds" of God. His presentation drew extensively on the later writings of the Old Testament: I & II Macchabees, the Books of Esther, Daniel and, especially, Judith. In her conference, "The Spirituality of the Magnificat," Sr. Mary Catherine Nolan, O.P., spoke of the experience of many who persevered confidently in prayer, even when confronted by oppressive situations similar to those described in the Magnificat. Fr. Lawrence Frizzell related the Magnificat to the Blessings rooted in the prayer tradition of the Pharisees (during the period of the Second Temple) and incorporated into the Blessing formulas of the

synagogue. Lastly, Fr. Walter Brennan, O.S.M., provided a summary of the document from the Servite General Chapter of 1995, "Servants of the Magnificat: The Canticle of the Blessed Virgin and Consecrated Life." The session on Thursday concluded with the celebration of the Eucharist in the crypt chapel of the National Shrine, celebrated by the Most Rev. William E. Lori, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington.

At the Wednesday evening session at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Bert Buby, S.M., spoke on the various ecclesial and Marian interpretations which have been attributed to the figure of the Woman who appears in the Book of Revelations (ch.12). On the concluding day of the meeting, Fr. Ronald Bagley, C.J.M., used the writings of St. John Eudes to illustrate Mary as "the perfect model of love towards God and neighbor" (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, 54).

The Mariological Society of America expresses its gratitude to all who contributed to its fiftieth anniversary meeting, especially to the contributors of this issue of *Marian Studies*. At its fiftieth anniversary meeting, the Society affirmed its founding purpose of studying God's blessing in Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, and it joins its prayer with that of Pope John Paul II:

O God, Almighty Father, as we make our way to you, our ultimate destiny, may all your children experience the gentle company of Mary, most holy, image of purest love, whom you chose to be Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. (Prayer for 1999: Preparation for the Great Jubilee)

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