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Preface: "With the Mother of the Lord on Pilgrimage to the New Millennium"

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PREFACE

"With the Mother of the Lord on Pilgrimage to the New Millennium"

51st Annual Meeting of the Mariological Society of America

The Mariological Society of America's fifty-first annual meeting took place at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, Illinois, May 24-26, 2000. In his welcome to the members of the Society, Bishop Wilton D. Gregory, Bishop of Belleville, said that it was "a particular honor to host the gathering this year as we all travel together with the Mother of the Lord on Pilgrimage to the New Millennium." The lovely setting for the meeting—the Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows—and the significant moment—the Great Jubilee 2000—influenced the choice of the meeting's title, "The Mother of the Lord on Pilgrimage to the New Millennium." Pilgrimage figures prominently in the celebration of the Great Jubilee; it is foremost among the signs by which "the institution of Jubilee has been enriched . . . which attest to the faith and foster the devotion of the Christian people" (Pope John Paul II: *Mysterium Incarnationis*, 7).

Sr. Jean Frisk (Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary) discussed the concept of pilgrimage in the Schoenstatt Movement, as outlined by its founder, Fr. Joseph Kentenich. Schoenstatt, which means "beautiful place," is a spirituality which designates certain places as "holy," conducive to encounters with the living God. The purpose of the Schoenstatt pilgrimage is to foster a new life and vision. The founder of the Schoenstatt noted that the secular world has an all-enveloping culture which forms opinions and influences actions. The pilgrimage experience

intends to instill a spirit of love into life's daily activities. The Virgin Mary is proposed as the image of "everyday sanctity." She is the one who was loved by God, but also the one who was loving as she advanced in the ordinary events of life.

Fr. Virgilio Elizondo (San Antonio, Texas) described Marian shrines as "places of encounter, welcome, and refuge." A necessary element for a fruitful pilgrimage is to leave the familiar behind and embark on a new journey, open to the mystery of God. The classical call to undertake a new journey was given to Blessed Juan Diego at Guadalupe. The ancient Nahuatl poem about Guadalupe describes how Our Lady's message was to leave behind the sorrow caused by the Spanish conquest and enter into a new land of beautiful flowers, singing birds, and restored health. The new existence is one which is relational and empowering. Through the Lady of Guadalupe's message, the Gospel was divested of its European context and put in the native way of thinking.

In "Marian Devotion for the New Millennium," Fr. Johann Roten, S.M., outlined some of the requisites for well-balanced Marian devotion in the future. Marian devotion will be less didactic and instructional, but more narrative and iconic. Through narrative, the story of Mary will be embedded in the fundamental story of creation's purpose and the individual's struggle. Through the iconic, the image of the Virgin Mary and her Child will be perceived as a summary of the whole of Christianity: the compassionate parent fostering, assisting, encouraging the child.

In "Pilgrimage: Devotion, Renewal, Tourism?," Fr. Nobert Brockman, S.M., described the great variety of pilgrim sites and types of pilgrimage both within Christianity and outside of it. There are over 6,150 sites of pilgrimage; 800 of these draw more than 10,000 visitors a year, and 19 attract more than 1,000,000 pilgrims a year.

Finally, my article, "Pilgrimage and Shrines: A Long-Delayed Recognition," presents an overview of the development of shrines and pilgrimage in Christian history, traces the early efforts to organize the personnel involved with pilgrimage and shrines, and gives special attention to the two documents from the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and

Itinerant People: Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee (1998) and *The Shrine: Memorial, Presence and Prophecy of the Living God* (1999).

The meeting concluded with Eamon R. Carroll's annual Survey, a feature of every meeting of the Mariological Society for the last thirty-two years.

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