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Editor's Preface

Thomas A. Thompson
University of Dayton

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Mariological Society of America 49th Annual Meeting (1998): "The Virgin Mary in Art"

The forty-ninth annual meeting of the Mariological Society of America took place at the International Schoenstatt Center, Waukesha, Wisconsin, May 27-29, 1998. The meeting's topic was "The Virgin Mary in Art." During the meeting, works of Marian art, submitted as part of the Mariological Society's "Call for Marian Art," were displayed. Over seventy pieces—icons, paintings, and sculptures—were featured. During the coming year, this exhibit will travel to Dayton, Ohio, and other cities; in 1999, it will be in Washington, D.C., as part of the Mariological Society's fiftieth anniversary meeting.

The 1998 program was innovative in many ways. The Mariological Society has sponsored many programs on Mary in the Sacred Scriptures and in doctrine. But this was the first program devoted to representations of Mary in art. Religious art has a specific purpose: it is not "art for art's sake." It is to remind us of God; it directs our gaze to the divine beauty present within creation. Because religious art speaks the "language of beauty" (Pope John Paul II, *Duodecimum Saeculum*), it is capable of reaching hearts and conveying a message which the spoken word alone cannot communicate. Because it contains "a certain resemblance to the truth" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*), religious art affirms that the creation mirrors divine truth and beauty.

The program focused on nineteenth- and twentieth-century representations of Marian art. The Renaissance and Baroque periods have furnished innumerable images of Mary, but our own period has many religious artists who, fascinated by the divine presence in the Virgin Mary, attempt to present her—sometimes in new and striking ways—to contemporary audiences. In 1973, at the inauguration of the permanent collection of modern reli-

gious art housed in sixty rooms in the Vatican Museum, Paul VI reflected on the possibilities of modern religious art. "The Church," he said, "has been known as the lover and teacher of the arts." Should museums of religious art be seen as "magnificent cemeteries" offering only the works of the past? Modern art, the pope admitted, is more subjective than classical art, but for that reason it can be perceived as more human. The pope observed that modern art has a "prodigious capacity . . . for expressing . . . the religious, the divine, the Christian" to the secularized world (*The Pope Speaks* 18, 2 [1973]: 141-44).

In the presidential address, Fr. George Kirwin, O.M.I., spoke of the challenge which Pope Paul VI had made to the Mariological Congress in Rome in 1975. "In what new and suitable way," he asked, "can the Virgin Mary be presented to the attention of the Christian people so that they will be stirred to a new zeal in their devotion to Mary?" Fr. Johann Roten, S.M., reminds us that, in the same 1975 address, Paul VI spoke of Mary's relation to the Holy Spirit. In Mary, the Holy Spirit produced the one who is all-beautiful, the one who most perfectly reflects the divine beauty.

Fr. Michael T. Morris, O.P., spoke of various representations of Mary from the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries—the pre-Raphaelites in England and the school of Père Couturier in France. Fr. Terence Dempsey, S.J., spoke of artists' representations of Mary from the last fifty years. Fr. Nicholas Glisson spoke of the images of Mary as found in the apparitions of the last century-and-a-half: the Miraculous Medal, LaSalette, Lourdes, Fatima, Medjugorje. Barbe Awalt and Paul Rhetts spoke on images of Mary in the New Mexican *santos*.

A concluding open forum brought artists and theologians together to discuss a wide range of topics—from the relation between spirituality and art to the economics of the art world. The meeting concluded with Eamon R. Carroll's annual survey of Marian literature; Fr. Carroll has delivered his "Annual Survey" at every meeting of the Mariological Society, without interruption, for the last thirty years.

The Mariological Society of America expresses its gratitude to all who contributed to its forty-ninth annual meeting, especially the contributors to this issue of *Marian Studies* who generously responded to the Mariological Society's request.