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Roger M. Charest

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, 1982

By

REV. ROGER M. CHAREST, S.M.M.

Your Excellency, Archbishop Flores, my fellow priests, Brothers, Sisters, members and friends of the Mariological Society of America.

First of all, on behalf of the Mariological Society of America, I would like to extend our thanks to Archbishop Flores for his most cordial invitation to our Society to hold its 33rd Annual Convention in his Archdiocese of San Antonio—the Metropolitan See of all of Texas and the home of the Alamo!

I would also like to thank the staff of the Casa San José, for opening their doors and their hearts to our Society for this year's deliberations.

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Permit me, also, at this time to pay tribute to four of our members who have died within this past year.* They are: Father Titus Cranny, of the Society of the Atonement, who died on April 28th; Father Eric May, Capuchin, who died on August 2nd; Father Richard Kugelman, Passionist, who died on October 13th; and Father Alexis E. McCarthy, Carmelite, who passed away on November 11th.

Father Titus Cranny, S.A., a charter member of our Society, was a well-known and well-respected ecumenist and leader in Church Unity. Author of several books on Christian unity, in 1970 he published a commentary on Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*, entitled, "Is Mary Relevant?" Our Society and the Church will miss this loyal theologian and friend.

Father Eric May, Capuchin, a member of our Society almost from the beginning, served on the Board of Directors in 1966, 1967 and 1972. The following papers of his appeared in *Marian Studies*: in Volume III, 1952 (pp. 111-141), "The Scriptural Basis for Mary's Spiritual Maternity" and in Volume XI, 1960 (pp. 21-59), "The Problems of a Biblical Mariology." He also contributed to Volume I of Carol's *Mariology*, "Mary in the Old Testa-

ment" (pp. 51-78), and to Volume III, "Mariological Societies" (pp. 272-281). He too was a tireless worker and loyal son of the Church and of Mary, the Mother of God.

Another loyal member of our Society was Father Richard Kugelmann, Passionist, a noted scripture scholar whose active participation in our yearly meetings proved his great interest in our Society. He served on the Board of Directors from 1957 to 1959 inclusively. His writings enriched our Society with such scholarly papers as: "The Object of Mary's Consent in the Annunciation" (*Marian Studies*, Vol. XI, 1960, pp. 60-84); "Mariology and Recent Biblical Literature" (Vol. XVIII, 1967, pp. 122-134); and "Presenting Mary to Today's Catholics" (Vol. XXII, 1971, pp. 49-53). His paper on "The Holy Name of Mary" appeared in Volume I (pp. 411-418) of Carol's *Mariology*. Here, then, was another scholar who has left his mark on the Society.

Another loyal friend and supporter of our Society was Father Alexis F. McCarthy, O.Carm., who passed away shortly after publishing a book for the Third Order Carmelites. The book is entitled *With Mary to the Mountain* (Carmelite Press, 1981, 143 pp.). It was co-edited with Father Howard Rafferty, O.Carm. Father McCarthy, very active in the Charismatic movement, served on the Mariological Society's Nominating Committee from 1976 through 1978. His zeal in the promotion of devotion to the Mother of God was in true Carmelite tradition. His love for and dedication to our Society will long be remembered by those of us who met him at our yearly conventions.

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On the occasion of the 450th Anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Juan Diego in 1531, our Mariological Society would be remiss if it did not give more than a passing nod to a Marian event that united two cultures (the Spanish and Aztec), transforming them into a living soul—the Mexican people. As Father Eugene Burke, C.S.P., wrote in the very first volume of *Marian Studies*: "Dogma and devotion are so closely intertwined in the history of Mariological thought that it is, at times, very difficult to separate them without doing an injustice

to one or the other" ("The Beginnings of a Scientific Mariology," Vol. I, p. 117). Referring to the Guadalupe event, a representative non-Catholic author, Lukas Vischer, described Guadalupe as "the sign of a Church rooted in the people."

Anticipating his pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pope John Paul phrased it in his own pilgrim way:

I rejoice particularly in the fact that I will find myself in the footsteps of so many pilgrims, who go from the whole of America, especially Latin America, to the Sanctuary of the Mother of God at Guadalupe. I myself come from a land and a nation whose heart beats in the great Marian Shrines, especially in the Shrine of Jasna Gora . . . This enables me to understand the people, the peoples, the Church, the continent, whose heart beats in the sanctuary of the Mother of God at Guadalupe.

And he concluded with the words: "I hope too that this will open the way for me to the heart of that Church, that people, and that continent" (*OssR*, Eng. Ed., Jan. 29, 1979, p. 12, col. 3).

If the heart of the Church and of a whole country can beat in a Marian Shrine like Guadalupe or Jasna Gora or Lourdes, surely there can be no object more worthy of our Marian studies and research than to explore in depth the theological as well as the historical, anthropological, cultural and spiritual implications of the Guadalupe event and the message which the Lady gave to the humble Aztec Indian, Juan Diego.

It is not the object of Mariology to analyze the scientific aspect which recent discoveries, with the help of infra-red radiation, have produced regarding the miraculous painting of the Madonna on the tilma and the subsequent human accretions or additions, no matter how important these may prove to be. What should interest the Mariologist are the dogmatic implications, such as Mary's divine as well as spiritual maternity (the Lady was a pregnant woman) and her Immaculate Conception (the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet). She was pregnant with a male child who was destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod (Apoc, Ch. 12).

The ultimate aim of our *Marian Studies*, and of all Mariology,

is to foster a better knowledge of Mary's role in salvation history and, thereby, to stimulate a true devotion to the Mother of God in the hearts of all her children. In his official welcome to our Society's Convention in Pittsburgh in 1961, Cardinal Wright, of beloved memory, pleaded with us to do just that with reference to devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe: "I think it timely and urgent," he said, "that I preface your academic, scholarly sessions by a plea that you watch for opportunities in your teaching, writing and preaching to stimulate devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe during the Mexican Marian year and during all the period of grave menace to Catholicism, and to civilization" (*Marian Studies*, Vol. XII, 1961, p. 7).

Vatican II has reminded us that, "true devotion does not consist in sterile or passing emotion, nor in a certain empty credulity, but it proceeds from true faith, by which we are led to acknowledge the excellence of God's Mother, and are aroused to filial love toward her as our Mother and to the imitation of her virtues" (#67, *Lumen gentium*, Translated by D. Unger, O.F.M., Cap., Montfort Publications, 1979).

That the Guadalupe event speaks for itself—the "miraculous" painting on the tilma, still fresh after 450 years; the eight million converts to the faith within ten years; the apparitions—is obvious and not the object of our studies. What should concern us, I believe, is to probe the sound theological roots contained both in the event and in the message which the Lady gave to Juan Diego—yes, for all the Americas. As the Mariological Society of America, we owe it to ourselves, as well as to our people, to study in depth the Mariological as well as the spiritual implications of the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

All devotion, all spirituality, must ultimately rest on solid theological foundations, otherwise they will degenerate into emotional aberrations and superstitious practices. The faithful look to the Church and its theologians to guide them in their spiritual lives as well as in their devotional practices. Let it not be said that we have ignored these important needs of our people under the pretext that our field is primarily dogmatic and speculative. We must not degenerate into simply a debating society.

Let not our studies be purely theoretical and sterile. Let them be dynamic and life-giving, as dynamic and life-giving as the Mother of God herself who is both the object and the subject of our Marian studies.

Doctrine and devotion must go hand in hand. Doctrine without devotion is like faith without works. And devotion without doctrine is like works without faith. It is our duty as teachers, writers, preachers "to be watchful for purity of doctrine," as Pope John Paul said on January 29, 1979 (*OssR*, Eng. Ed., Feb. 5, 1979, N. 6 [567]) in his opening address at the Puebla Conference of Latin-American Bishops.

The Guadalupe event is literally fraught with doctrine as well as devotion. As we lead our people into the beautiful devotion of Our Lady of Guadalupe, let us make sure that they are properly informed of the equally-beautiful doctrines contained in the Guadalupe message. It is so easy to go off into what I might call "private" interpretations of that message. This can only lead to false devotions. If our interpretations are deeply ecclesial, that is to say (and I quote Pope Paul VI), "not subject to the discretionary power of individualistic criteria and perspectives but to that of communion with the Church and her pastors" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*), then we need not fear to mislead our people.

In conclusion, I would like to quote this brief passage from Pope John Paul's talk at the Puebla Conference and apply it to all of us here today: "May she, the 'Star of Evangelization,' be your guide in your future reflections and decisions. May she obtain for you from her Divine Son:

- the boldness of prophets and the evangelical prudence of pastors,
- the clear-sightedness of teachers and the reliability of guides and directors,
- courage as witnesses, and the calmness, patience and gentleness of fathers. . . ." (*OssR*, Eng. Ed., Feb. 5, 1979, IV, Conc.)

May Our Lady of Guadalupe transform all our academic endeavors into so many beacon lights guiding the faithful along the paths of true and solid devotion to the Mother of God.

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I would like to conclude, if you will permit me, on an altogether different note. It concerns someone very dear and close to my heart. And that person is the founder of our Religious Community, St. Louis de Montfort. About a year ago, our Superior General, Father Marcel Gendrot, initiated a petition to the Holy See asking for St. Louis Marie de Montfort to be declared a Marian Doctor of the Church. I need not elaborate here on the world-wide influence the writings of our Saint have had on the universal Church in the field of Marian devotion, ever since the discovery of his well-known treatise on *True Devotion to Mary*, which book was found 126 years after his death and which has since been translated into countless languages around the world. It is my understanding that many Cardinals, Bishops, Religious Communities and lay groups as well as individual theologians and scholars have already petitioned the Holy See in this matter. Pope John Paul's personal interest in the writings of St. Louis de Montfort is evident from his remarks, both public and to the members of our Community. Addressing himself to a group of French pilgrims, gathered in St. Peter's Square last September 9th, he said, in part, and I quote: "St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort can still teach us today how true devotion to Mary must turn us completely to Christ, the Wisdom of God." Would it be presumptuous on my part to expect the Mariological Society of America to put in its own petition for this worthy cause? Even if it is, I am presenting it for your kind consideration.

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Finally, I would like to share the "Good News" which some of you may not have heard yet, and that it, that our own beloved Episcopal Moderator, Bishop Austin Vaughan, has been named a member of the Bishops' Synod which will meet in Rome in 1983. Our congratulations and our prayers are with you on this most important assignment which the Holy See places on your shoulders as a sure sign of the Holy Father's affection for you

and his complete confidence in your Excellency's theological competence.

*After the Convention, we received notification of the deaths of two well-known Mariologists: Rev. Joaquín María Alonso, C.M.F. (†December 12, 1981) and Rev. Msgr. Georges Jouassard (†November 30, 1981). Father Alonso was the Director of *Ephemerides Mariologicae*, which will publish his biography as well as a bibliography of his works. Monsignor Jouassard served as President of the French Mariological Society from 1949 to 1962; he was, in fact, one of its founding fathers (1935).