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Official Welcome

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OFFICIAL WELCOME

by

HIS EXCELLENCY, THE MOST REV. JOHN J. WRIGHT, D.D.
Bishop of Pittsburgh

I must begin by expressing my prayerful, warm gratitude for the extraordinarily beautiful chalice I received from The Mariological Society of America on the recent occasion of my Silver Sacerdotal Jubilee. The exquisite chalice is the work of the fervent and affectionate imagination of our dynamic spur to all good deeds within the Society, Father Juniper Carol; it will be treasured as the most significant and welcome of all possible souvenirs of my priestly years, combining, as it does, the symbols of Mary, the memory of beloved Saints, the pledge of your prayers and the vessel essential to the daily liturgy.

It is, then, with added motives of grateful appreciation that I bid you all welcome this morning. I beg God's blessing on your deliberations and pray that they will contribute mightily to the refreshment of the thought, work and devotion of all our Mariologists.

I note with special satisfaction the theme of your deliberations. It links the Old Testament hopes with the New Testament realities and invites you, as specialists in studies on the Blessed Mother, to make your contribution to the strengthening of the ties, intellectual and spiritual, between all the heirs to Hebrew prophecy and the disciples of Christian preaching concerning the Kingdom of Christ and the privileges of His Blessed Mother.

Permit me to add a comment of a topical and devotional character. [Pope John XXIII has declared a Marian Year for

Mexico to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the proclamation by Pope St. Pius X of the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe for all the Latin American countries.

The Marian Year runs from October 12, 1960, to October 12, 1961. These dates are also significant, for October 12 is the civil holiday honoring the opening up by Columbus of the New World to European colonization and to the preaching by Catholic missionaries of the Christian faith. The great admiral sailed the seas on a flagship bearing the name of Mary; his daily prayer and that of his devout men was *Jesus cum Maria sit nobis in via!*

The Mexican Marian Year and the devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe are of direct concern to Latin America. But I venture the strong suggestion that we of the United States and Canada have an intimate interest in both. It becomes daily, perhaps one should say *hourly*, more clear that the destinies of all the Americas are inextricably intertwined; the sources of evil for all the nations of both American continents are the same, and so must be the sources of inspiration and strength. We of the United States and Canada owe it to ourselves and to our Latin American brethren to lose the advantage of nothing that will make us more surely and more securely united in love for the Catholic faith and in defense of our freedom to profess and practice that faith.

I think it exact to say that the first major threat to such faith and freedom to come from the modern specifically atheistic revolution was that which struck Mexico so cruelly in the 1920s. By the same token, I think it significant that the first successful resistance to aggressive atheism in a nation of the Americas was that of the Catholic Mexicans of the land favored by the apparitions and first patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The fresh menace of the same spirit of atheistic revolution to Catholic faith and human freedom all over America,

beginning in Latin America but by no means confined to there, makes it, I think, timely and urgent 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.