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REPORT ON THE BOSTON CONVENTION

The 1963 Annual Convention of The Mariological Society of America will long be remembered as one of the most memorable ever held by our organization. The meeting took place at the Statler Hilton Hotel in Boston, Mass., on January 2 and 3, 1963, under the gracious auspices of His Eminence, Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston. Answering a personal invitation of His Eminence, about one hundred and fifty priests, plus a few Sisters and seminarians, attended the various sessions.

The Convention opened shortly after 10 o'clock in the morning with a prayer and official welcome by His Eminence. After expressing his delight at having the Mariological Society meet in his Metropolitan See, the Cardinal Archbishop proceeded to give some sound and timely advice to the delegates present. He stressed the importance of not deviating from recent papal statements regarding devotion to Our Blessed Lady. There is a tendency in certain quarters—the Cardinal said—to “soft-pedal” the cult of Our Lady, and even to “water down” traditional Catholic teaching concerning her unique prerogatives in order to render our position more attractive to those outside the fold. He warned the delegate never to be deceived by those who claim that Our Lady is an obstacle to the progress of ecumenism. He urged the members of The Mariological Society to take advantage of their learning and scholarship in order to clarify even further the various Marian doctrines, and thus lay the foundation for a more intelligent appreciation of Our Lady’s sublime role in the scheme of salvation.

After thanking His Eminence for his inspiring address, the Rev. William G. Most, Vice-President of the Society, went on to explain that Father Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C., our President, was unable to attend the meeting due to an unexpected trip to

Germany on orders from his religious superiors. Fr. Most added that, for this reason, he would be privileged to preside over the various sessions of the Convention.

Fr. Most then called upon Fr. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., Secretary of the Society, to make a few announcements. Fr. Carol began by explaining that for the first time in the history of our society there would be no registration fee for those attending the Convention. The reason was that His Eminence, Cardinal Cushing, had graciously offered to underwrite both the luncheon and the reception. Echoing the sentiments of the delegates, Fr. Carol expressed the profound gratitude of all to His Eminence for this exquisite gesture of kindness and generosity on his part. There followed a few other announcements concerning the election of new members to the Board of Directors, the meeting of the Board in the evening, and the arrangements made by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Lawrence J. Riley, of St. John's Seminary, for the celebration of Holy Mass during the two days of the Convention.

Since there was no presidential address this year, owing to Father O'Connor's absence, Fr. Most immediately proceeded to introduce the next speaker on the program, Fr. Cyril Vollert, S.J. The latter's theme was *The Nature of Our Lady's Grace*. The distinguished Jesuit theologian surveyed various opinions on the subject, showing little sympathy for some of them (e.g. the view that attributes a "capital" grace to Mary), and went on to describe, with remarkable insight, the singular graces adorning Mary's soul as a consequence of her sublime dignity as Mother of God. The discussion which followed—unfortunately very brief because of the pressure of time—was ably conducted by Fr. Most.

Towards noon the delegates gathered in the Grand Ball Room of the hotel for the traditional reception, which was followed by an excellent luncheon at about 12:30 P.M. At the end of the luncheon, His Eminence, Cardinal Cushing, again addressed the assembled guests, this time turning his attention mostly to the Second Vatican Council and its unlimited possibilities for "revitalizing"

many phases of the Church. The Cardinal Archbishop likewise suggested that the Mariological Society might well undertake the publication of a magazine to "popularize" Mariology and thus bring the Society's learned discussions to the level of the average Catholic. So enthusiastic was he in this connection, that he very graciously offered to finance such a publication for a year. (At the meeting of the Board of Directors that same evening a committee of four was appointed to explore the feasibility of this project. Those serving on this committee are: Fr. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., Chairman; Fr. William G. Most, Fr. Philip C. Hoelle, S.M., and Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, M.S.)

The second general assembly opened promptly at 3:30 in the afternoon, and began with the election of new members to the Board of Directors. On recommendation of the Nominating Committee, its chairman, Fr. Francis P. Tomai, S.M.M., submitted the names of Fr. Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M., of Holy Name College, Washington, D.C., and Fr. Patrick J. Gaffney, S.M.M., of Montfort Seminary, Litchfield, Conn. The proposed slate was unanimously approved by those present.

The election was immediately followed by a lecture on *The Problem of Mary's Holiness in the First Christian Centuries*, by Fr. Ambrose Agius, well-known English Benedictine, now residing in Newark, N.J. The speaker quoted and commented upon various patristic passages which seem hardly compatible with the doctrine of Our Lady's unique sinlessness as traditionally held in the Church. He suggested, among other things, that we should not be unduly disturbed by these unfavorable texts, since they did not represent the total thinking of the authors in question. During the discussion which followed, led by the eminent patrologist, Fr. Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., several delegates engaged in a very enlightening exchange of views touching on the delicate problems of the primitive Church's awareness of Our Lady's holiness, the teaching of the Council of Trent on the subject, and the ever-perplexing question of the development of doctrine.

On the second day of the Convention the general assembly, which began at 9:30 in the morning, featured a paper on *Our Lady's Holiness in the New Testament*, read by the Rev. James C. Turro, Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Darlington, N.J. The learned speaker pointed out that, while the New Testament is understandably scarce in explicit references to Mary's holiness, nevertheless, it contains sufficient passages which permit us to draw legitimate conclusions to that effect. Among others, he cited the Angel's salutation to Our Lady as "*Kecharitômenê*" (Lk 1:28) which literally means only "[Thou] favored one," but which has been traditionally interpreted to imply a fullness of grace in Mary.

The discussion following this paper was led by Fr. Philip J. King, Professor of Sacred Scripture at St. John's Seminary in Boston. Having praised the speaker's excellent lecture, Fr. King made a few personal and pertinent remarks, and invited further comments from the floor. The very spirited exchange of views which followed, focused mostly on the various criteria for interpreting biblical passages. Among those who took an active part in the discussion was Fr. Most, presiding officer, who made some very important and timely observations on the subject. He eloquently reminded his audience that, according to Pope Pius XII and other pronouncements of the Magisterium, in order to arrive at the true sense of a biblical text, philology and history are not sufficient; theological criteria must be employed as well.

After a five-minute recess, the delegates again assembled to hear a very thought-provoking and scholarly dissertation by Fr. Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M. His topic was *Our Lady's Freedom from Concupiscence*. Since this topic has seldom, if ever, been treated adequately in the English language, the members of the Society expressed sincere gratitude to Fr. Maguire for his lucid exposition of this complex question. The discussion leader was Fr. Alfonso G. Palladino, Professor of Sacred Theology at St. John's Seminary in Boston.

The last paper on the program, entitled *Our Lady's Impeccability*, was to be read by Fr. Philip J. Donnelly, S.J., Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Weston College, Weston, Mass. Owing to the tremendous burdens of his duties as editor of the New Catholic Encyclopedia, Fr. Donnelly was, unfortunately, unable to produce a written text on the subject originally assigned to him. Nevertheless, he analyzed at length and with characteristic erudition several points of doctrine calculated to throw some light on the general theme of sin and sinlessness. His discussion leader was Fr. Barry J. Rankin, C.P., Professor of Theology at the Passionist House of Studies in Louisville, Kentucky.

The last item on the program was the business meeting, which began with the reading of the following citation by Fr. Most:

THE MARIOLOGICAL AWARD FOR 1962

Citation

Each year the Mariological Society of America is wont to honor one of its members by conferring on him a special award in recognition of his notable achievements in the field of Mariology. The scholar so honored this year is the Reverend Edward Dennis O'Connor, C.S.C., professor of theology at Notre Dame University, and distinguished President of our Society.

Though born in Denver, the fair capital of the Centennial State, Father O'Connor spent most of his early life in Pittsburgh, Pa., until he entered the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1939. Having graduated with an A.B. from the University of Notre Dame in 1944, he took the regular theology courses at Holy Cross College in Washington, D.C., and there received the Holy Priesthood in 1948. Recognizing his unusual talents, his religious superiors singled him out for higher studies at the Catholic Institute in Paris, where he received his licenciature in 1950, and later at Le Salchoir, where he obtained the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology in 1961. His doctoral dissertation, entitled *Faith in the Synoptic Gospels*, was published by the Notre Dame University Press that same year.

Father O'Connor has been a member of the Department of The-

ology of Notre Dame University since 1952; a member of the Institute of Medieval Studies *ibid.* since 1954; and Director of Studies at Moreau Seminary *ibid.* since 1959. In 1962 he was unanimously elected President of The Mariological Society of America.

Besides contributing scholarly articles to such publications as MARIAN STUDIES, *The Marian Era, Thought, The American Ecclesiastical Review, The Review of Politics*, and *The Catholic Dictionary of Theology*, now in course of publication in England, Father O'Connor has edited two widely-hailed symposiums on Our Blessed Lady, namely, *The Mystery of the Woman* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1955), and the monumental work entitled *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception* (*ibid.*, 1958).

Among the many honors conferred on Father O'Connor we may mention his membership in the Pontifical International Marian Academy, and in the Pontifical Roman Theological Academy. In 1958 he was awarded the Marian Library Medal by the University of Dayton, Ohio, for his work on the Immaculate Conception, mentioned above. To these and many other well-deserved tributes, The Mariological Society of America now wishes to add its own, by dence of further recognition of his distinguished career and high conferring on him the special Mariological Award for 1962 as evi-scholarship.

On behalf of Fr. O'Connor who was absent, Fr. Walter J. Burghardt, S.J., accepted the Mariological Award consisting of a beautiful scroll and a check in amount of \$200.00. He then read from the lectern the following acceptance address which Fr. O'Connor had mailed from Germany:

To the members of the Mariological Society of America, assembled
for the Fourteenth National Convention

If it were at all possible, I would be with you in Boston. The width of the ocean prevents me from attending this convention, but at least I will be joined with you in that communion of hearts which the Son of God made possible when He gathered us into one, by taking our flesh from the Virgin Mary. My Mass on January 2 will be

offered for the intention that this convention may be rich in theological and spiritual fruits for all who take part in it.

For the Mariological Award, I am most grateful. It has not been duly earned, but the encouragement it brings will be for me a stimulus to try harder to deserve it. To Bishop Wright and to the Award Committee, I express my warmest appreciation.

Kindnesses of this sort draw attention to a certain personal dimension which is characteristic of theology in general, but is especially noticeable in the theology of the Blessed Virgin. For in comparison with other disciplines, theology has the advantage of being not only a disinterested investigation of truth, but also a deepening of acquaintance with a person. The theologian's difficult task is to speak with the most refined precision and luminous intelligibility of that which is absolutely first and absolutely last; of that which underlies all things and transcends all things. But he pursues his work in the awareness that the Absolute and Ultimate is a living Person, and a mysterious communion of Persons, whose creative power embraces him with an immense Love, and in an intimate Presence, that perpetually threatens to liquefy his ratiocination into silent peace and adoration. The apparently cold intellectualism of his theological treatises is actually a counterpart to the warmth of his love. If human minds have been able to endure the sustained abstraction of scholastic theology, it is only because of the intense love of God that impelled their research; conversely, for a love that had in a certain measure experienced the infinite purity and transcendence of the Divine Beloved, the abstractions of theology enjoyed, by reason of their purity, a certain privileged rank in serving as Divine Names. It was when scholastic theology was divorced from ardent piety that it became, first a frivolous intellectual game, and then a labyrinth of intolerable subtleties.

The bond between intellectual reflection and personal devotion is particularly manifest when the theologian's attention is focussed on the Mother of Christ. Perhaps this is because the theologian, as a human being, is more responsive to personal values in one who, for all her dignity as Mother of God and Queen of the Cosmos, remains a sister of the human family. Perhaps it is because she who shared so intimately in the life and work of Christ has been given the special

grace of communicating to others an intimate appreciation of Christ's theandric love through her own human but holy affection. Whatever be the reason, the fact has often been observed that the theology of Our Lady, even more than other branches of theology, tends to develop in a spirit of personal piety. It is in accord with this spirit that I hope I may be allowed to refer this award to Our Lady herself, in regarding it as a human token of that heavenly kindness with which she blesses our weak efforts to honor her, more than she reproves us for all we have neglected.

On the other hand, this award is a poignant reminder to me personally, and perhaps also to others, of all the work that still remains to be done on the theology of Mary. The millions of Christians who find in our veneration of Mary a scandal to their worship of Christ; the great numbers of Catholics who accept Mary's religious rank with a routine familiarity that fails to kindle in their hearts that affection which she merits and which they need: these are signs enough to prove that we have not yet expounded this major mystery of our Faith in such wise as to bring home its meaning to all who approach it with open minds and good will.

As theologians, we have a grave responsibility. It is not sufficient for us to be pious, loving sons. Just as our intellectual work needs to be conducted in a spirit of piety, so our piety stands under the obligation of fructifying in honest and profound intelligence. This does not mean a scholarship which, amid heaps of accumulated erudition, loses the living sense of the life-giving Truth to be pursued. It means the sensitive appreciation for ourselves, and the enlightening presentation to others, of the dimensions, the reason, and the meaning of that mysterious association of a human mother in the life and work of the Incarnate Son of God.

It is to promote this end, I presume, that the Bishop Wright Award has been established. I would like to express my appreciation to the donors of the Award by joining them in the hope, and pledging to them whatever my efforts can contribute, that this end may be realized.

Rev. Edward D. O'Connor, C.S.C.
Tübingen
December 27, 1962

After the reading of Fr. O'Connor's letter, the presiding officer, Fr. Most, called upon Fr. Philip C. Hoelle, S.M., to give a brief report on the various regional meetings held by the members of The Mariological Society during 1962. This was followed by a financial report by Fr. J. Armand Robichaud S.M., treasurer of the organization. The Secretary of the Society, Fr. Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M., then announced that the next annual Convention would be held in Kansas City, Mo., on Thursday and Friday, January 2 and 3, 1964, under the gracious auspices of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Charles H. Helmsing, D.D., Bishop of Kansas City. The general theme to be discussed will be: *Ecumenical Problems in Mariology*. The Secretary likewise read the names of 27 applicants for membership, and their enrollment in the Society was duly ratified by the delegates. Finally, Fr. Juniper explained that for the past few months the Montfort Fathers at Bay Shore, N.Y., had been handling the mailing of MARIAN STUDIES and would continue to do so in the future. He took this opportunity to thank them publicly and warmly for their generous and efficient cooperation in this respect.

At this point, our Vice-President, Fr. Most, went to the lectern to pay a fitting tribute to all those who, by their presence or otherwise, had contributed so much to the tremendous success of the Boston meeting. He singled out as deserving of particular gratitude:

- a) His Eminence, Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, for playing host to the 1963 Convention, for his inspiring addresses to our delegates, for his very generous financial contributions to cover the expenses of the meeting, and for his gracious offer to finance a popular Mariological magazine;
- b) The Most Rev. John J. Wright, D.D., Bishop of Pittsburgh and Episcopal Chairman of our Society, for his continued and much-appreciated support of the various undertakings of our organization;
- c) The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Lawrence J. Riley and Father Alfonso

Palladino for their valuable assistance in making the proper arrangements for the 1963 meeting. Fr. Most emphasized that, as Chairman of the Program Committee, Msgr. Riley deserved the highest commendation for his efficient and intelligent handling of all arrangements;

d) The Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, M.S., editor of *Our Lady's Digest*, for his generous donations to the Mariological Society;

e) The various speakers and discussion leaders for their scholarly dissertations and informative discussions.

Upon a duly seconded motion, Fr. Most declared the Convention officially adjourned, and closed the final session with a prayer of thanksgiving at about 3:00 P.M.