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Welcoming Remarks

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WELCOMING REMARKS

THE MOST REVEREND CHARLES B. McLAUGHLIN, D.D.

Bishop of St. Petersburg

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of Thy faithful. Enkindle in them the fire of Thy Divine Love. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and Thou shall renew the face of the earth.

Hail, Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen

Mary, seat of wisdom, pray for us.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Father President, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Once again I have the great pleasure of welcoming the Mariological Society's Annual Meeting to the Diocese of St. Petersburg. It is indeed an honor for us to have you here. I hope the bright sunshine of the West Coast of Florida symbolizes the brightness and warmth of our welcome. Please let us know if we can be of any special service to you during your stay.

The characteristic or quality of optimism can hardly be said to be the prevailing mood today in the Church. Yet, this is the virtue needed most perhaps today in the Church, to change the atmosphere that at times is almost pessimistic. I can't think of anything that would be more helpful in building up the hope and joyfulness of our Faith than to help to re-establish Our Blessed Mother in her proper place in the Church. It seems to me that the time is right for this to come about. There seems to be a new interest among our people, and especially among

our young people, in finding out about Mary and her proper place in the Church, and her relationship to Our Divine Saviour. There also seems to be a new upward trend of external expression or devotion of love and loyalty to Mary. Witness the ever-increasing numbers of people now coming to the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception especially on diocesan pilgrimages. That wonderful Pastoral of the Bishops, "Behold Your Mother," is another expression of renewed interest and devotion to Mary.

Our Blessed Mother is the source of our joy. Is there any reason then, that she should not be the renewed cause of our optimism in today's Church? Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the members of the Mariological Society for your scholarly attention and unfailing devotion to Mary and to her place in the Church. May God continue to bless your efforts.