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Invocation and Welcome

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INVOCATION AND WELCOME

By

THE MOST REV CHARLES B McLAUGHLIN, D D

Almighty God, our Creator, we are conscious of Your presence here this morning and we realize that all good things, especially all graces, come from You. On this occasion when we are gathered here to honor the Holy Mother of Your Divine Son, fill us with renewed faith, a deep sense of brotherhood with Your Divine Son and a renewed reverence for and devotion to our Blessed Mother.

Enable us as Your instruments to remind all mankind today that the world still needs the spiritual motherhood of Mary because she shines as the model of virtues for the whole community.

Enable our people to be filled with renewed devotion and faith that the path to Our Divine Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will become easier and straighter today, as it has always been, through the true devotion to His Mother, Mary.

Bless our endeavors and deliberations these days, O Almighty God, through Jesus Christ, Your Son Our Lord. Amen.

Right Reverend, Very Reverend, Reverend Fathers and Sisters:

It is my happy privilege at this time to welcome you to the new Diocese of St Petersburg. I know that your ranks have been thinned somewhat by the ravages of the "flu bug." We are happy to have you here, even though the weather is somewhat chilly for Florida. I hope that the bright, warm Florida sunshine will be indicative of our own hospitality.

It is a distinct honor for the new diocese to play host to such a distinguished group of scholars as yourselves. It is heartening and encouraging for all of us, and especially for our people, to know that there are men and women like you who are con-

vinced that in these days of change and some confusion, the true devotion to Our Blessed Mother stands as a beacon light guiding the paths of men to Her Divine Son

I feel certain that not only will your efforts be successful to explain more clearly the true devotion and place of Mary in Catholic doctrine in the light of Vatican II, but through such work you will be an inspiration to the rest of us. Therefore, again we are most happy to have such evidence of faith in our midst

May I say that you are in an area that once flourished with great devotion to Mary. This devotion came from the early Spanish Missionaries who trod over this land. Through the great efforts of our predecessor, Archbishop Hurley, truly a great churchman and scholar, the early history of the Christian beginnings of this land are marked quite clearly now. There were seven different early colonizing expeditions made upon this West Coast of Florida, all of which failed. Finally, the successful colonizing action took place on the East Coast at St. Augustine. On the West Coast and on the East Coast, however, the banner of Our Blessed Mother was hoisted by those early explorers and by the early missionaries.

Please let our priests know if there is anything we can do for you while you are here. I hope you will come back again.