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Presidential Address

Charles W. Neumann

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

REV. CHARLES W. NEUMANN, S.M.

A glance at the twenty-three volumes of *MARIAN STUDIES* will reveal what great discretion has been allowed the president of the Society in choosing a topic for his address. I should like to avail myself of that liberty in proposing to you, in the first part of this simple talk, a report on a project in which we have become involved, and, in the second part, a series of reflections of my own, stimulated in part by our convention theme, concerning the relationship between Marian controversy and Marian synthesis.

Since in November each of you who are members or associate members of the Society received a letter and questionnaire concerning the fourthcoming Marian pastoral of the American bishops, I feel this would be the occasion to brief you on the background of the letter and the reaction to it from the Society.

As to the background, the letter that bore my signature as president of the Society, that of Father Eamon Carroll as a member of the Board of Directors, and that of Father Alfred Boeddeker as a member of the Society and Executive Director of the Marian Center in San Francisco is due entirely to their initiative. You may recall that through the Franciscan Marian Center Fr. Boeddeker arranged the promotion and planning of Fr. Carroll's six-month 1971 Marian Lecture Tour which brought solid Marian doctrine to fifty-eight dioceses in thirty states. When a joint pastoral of the American bishops on Mary began to be spoken about and prepared, these two members of the Society conceived the idea of enlisting the talents and efforts of the rest of us in readying ourselves for giving the pastoral full support and dissemination. Some of you may be

surprised that such an initiative should precede the actual publication of the pastoral and should have been undertaken, I add, without it being thought necessary to obtain clearance from the body issuing the pastoral. The justification for the early start lies in the enormous amount of work that the Marian Center envisages putting into this project; planning had to be begun well in advance to the pastoral. In that planning those of you have figured who have responded to our letter of October 1972.

We take it for granted that we are talking about a document whose contents are not yet known to us. It is not our purpose to anticipate the message of the pastoral, inquire into the details of its composition, search out its progress toward publication, or estimate when it will be released. You have probably read, in press reports of the November meeting of the bishops, that the committee entrusted with preparing it is chaired by the host of our meeting, His Eminence John Cardinal Carberry, and that he is aided by Archbishop Timothy Manning of Los Angeles, Archbishop Humberto Medeiros of Boston, Bishop William Baum of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Bishop John Dougherty, Auxiliary of Newark, and Bishop David Maloney of Wichita. A team of six advisers, four from our Society, began work last Spring on the document, which in amended form was sent by the committee to the rest of the bishops for their reaction prior to the November meeting. If publication plans materialize the pastoral will be the first Marian message to be directed by the bishops collectively to all the faithful of the United States. It has but two or three counterparts in the communications of other national episcopal conferences since Vatican II.

It is understandable, then, that every effort should be made even beforehand to secure an effective response to such a pastoral, a welcome initiative indeed in these days of silence about Mary and her role in salvation history and in the Church. In September the Marian Center contacted all the American bish-

ops to express gratitude for their initiative as well as to offer the Center's services. Specifically the Center indicated that it was going to write to Catholic universities, colleges, seminaries, provinces of religious men and women, lay societies, and the larger parishes throughout the country, informing them of the pastoral so that they in turn might prepare or secure persons capable of explaining it and following through with the Marian doctrine it will cover. It is in this connection that, at considerable expense graciously borne by the Center, personal letters were addressed to each of the 185 persons on the membership roster of the Mariological Society and the 53 associate members, with self-addressed and stamped envelopes included for easy reply. Plans were to have the letters for the other groups mentioned earlier ready for mailing at the beginning of the new year, although this represents several thousand letters and is quite a task to be so promptly dispatched.

What has been the reaction of the members of our Society, you will ask, to the request addressed to them? Fifty of the 185 persons on our membership roster have replied to date in the first two months after the mailing reached them. Fifty out of 185 after two months may not sound overwhelming. Responses, however, will still be coming in, so that the number so far received does not totally reflect the Society's reaction; responses, for example, can be expected from active members, as yet unheard from, whose interest has brought them to this convention as to many previous ones. It should, moreover, be noted that, as the Secretary could more amply recount, our membership roster as printed in the latest *MARIAN STUDIES* contains several inactive members whose intent has probably been to let their membership lapse. Letters, however, went out to them as well, in the hope that, whatever their status, they might be alerted to the pastoral. Five of the 185 mailings to our membership were returned unclaimed. From the 53 associate members 14 replies have been received and two mailings returned unclaimed.

What is most encouraging about the replies is their unanimous endorsement of the pastoral and their almost unanimous offer of services in implementing it once it is published. Only three, while favorable to the project, felt they could offer no assistance at all—one because of ill-health, another because of a surcharge of work, another because he is no longer a member. Forty-four of the members and associate members replied that they were in a position to encourage and assist local religious and lay groups in sponsoring lectures, conferences, or other Marian observances. Thirty-three pledged their own talents and time in planning Marian events in elaboration on the pastoral. Thirty-six offered themselves for delivering lectures or series of sermons. Twenty-two promised to submit articles commenting on the pastoral's message. Twenty-five so far have announced their availability for traveling within their own or other regions to lecture in connection with the Marian observances stemming out of the pastoral.

It is significant that the members of the hierarchy who are members of the Mariological Society have most enthusiastically replied to the questionnaire. Cardinal Carberry, chairman of the pastoral committee, is hosting our convention. Cardinal Wright, our episcopal chairman, hastened to endorse the program "with affectionate blessings and the pledge of my fraternal prayers," as well as with concrete suggestions, a contribution to the Center, and the offer to engage, if possible, in Marian observances during his presence in the country in August and September. Bishops Charles H. Helmsing, Charles B. McLaughlin and Lawrence J. Riley have also replied with full support.

Concrete recommendations on how to foster the impact of the pastoral ranged over a field of activities difficult to summarize. Probably echoing the mind also of many who have not replied, three members indicated they would prefer to see the pastoral first—its nature, aims, and perspectives—before offering concrete recommendations.

A series of suggestions concerned the overall approach to Marian doctrine, for example: a scriptural rather than devotional approach; clarification of Mary's position in the Church and in the Christian's daily life of faith and love; Mary as model of faith for the charismatic Catholics in prayer groups; Mary's relevance to young people, especially teenagers; the ecumenical significance of the Virgin Mary; a demythologizing, where necessary, in what was said about Mary in the popular mind; a confident refutation of the supposition that the rank and file of the Catholic faithful are less interested in her than before.

Several suggestions concerned the aid of other persons that might be enlisted in the program of disseminating the pastoral's message. Priests' senates, deanery meetings, and national sisters' councils were thought of as possible agencies in this regard, as were Legion of Mary groups, Third Orders, the Christian Life Communities, and other youth groups. A Marian Day observance was recommended for universities and religious communities in connection with the pastoral. Several respondents were sure that other members of their religious communities would want to be involved in the program, and two offered the resources and facilities of their college for this purpose, including qualified faculty members ready to speak on Marian subjects. A course on Mary for religious was proposed. The specialized resources of the Marian Library were offered, and the suggestion made that the National Shrine be a center for year-long preaching and lecturing about the pastoral. A concerted effort should be made, it was noted, to engage priests, theologians, and preachers who are young and fresh in their outlook.

Publications of some sort ranked with preaching and lecturing as the most obvious means of complementing the pastoral. The most ambitious proposal, already being investigated, called for a frequent newsletter to be distributed to all the parishes of the country, as also a series of letters to Marian

religious congregations and organizations for promoting the circulation and study of the pastoral. Well-researched articles on sensitive questions about Mary in publications both Catholic and secular, both scholarly and popular, were recommended several times. The preparation of pamphlets on Mary was also seen as filling a critical need. Several respondents asked for copies as soon as possible of the *Recommended Readings* list offered as one of the Marian Center services, and others asked that resource materials be made available more widely, particularly the works of Canon René Laurentin. Three members foresaw highlighting the pastoral in periodicals for which they or their religious congregations are responsible, and in the same vein several thought of alerting their congregation's apostolic office to publicize the document and organize series of sermons to be given on it by their priests.

Many suggestions envisaged preaching or lecturing. Retreats provided the framework in which four members saw possibilities for their activity in following up on the pastoral—retreat conferences and discussions as well as lectures given by scholars invited from outside the retreat-house staff. Triduums and novenas preparatory to Marian feasts were also suggested as opportune occasions for preaching on the pastoral, as were a series of conferences that could be organized on the parish level in the Fall of 1973 and, likewise for the Fall, a series of Sunday homilies in which themes of the pastoral could figure. Strong hope was expressed that the pastoral would effectively be brought to the attention of the parish community from the pulpit, and that related programs in the parish would include adults as well as children. Emphasis was laid on the need for assuring that the lectures to be organized be entrusted to sound theologians teaching with Scripture and Vatican II guidelines as basis of their approach.

In the area of Marian devotion as distinct from the dissemination of the pastoral's message about Mary, the Rosary, recited publicly with meditation on the mysteries as a digest of

salvation history, was encouraged in several replies. Marian feasts, it was also said, could be more impressively celebrated in the aftermath of the pastoral. A regional or diocesan celebration of some Marian feast was urged.

The summary I have just made of the concrete recommendations for implementing the Marian pastoral naturally leads one to ask what use is to be made of these and further suggestions. The questionnaire replies in which they were made will be acknowledged by the Marian Center in San Francisco. The Center intends to publicize the recommendations in further correspondence and, where appropriate, coordinate them in a program that will get under way once the larger part of the replies have come in from the many other priests that are being contacted. One facet of the program comprises the preparation of a roster of speakers, clerical, religious, and lay, on Marian subjects for different regions of the country. A file for each diocese is being set up to assure that the services of the Center and those who are willing to cooperate with it might be available as extensively as possible once the pastoral has appeared. Reading lists and copies of the pastoral will also be offered by the Center. The unique opportunity for the Mariological Society thus to pool its efforts with those of other groups seemed inviting enough to warrant our wholehearted participation. One can only rejoice at Fr. Boeddeker's initiative and the resources he has so generously made available for the program.

I have reported to you at length on these activities, hopefully growing out of the Marian pastoral of the American bishops, with two reasons in mind: 1) The objectives of the Mariological Society for the study and dissemination of theological doctrine on the Virgin Mary seem to be served by whatever interest and cooperation we can bring to this program. 2) Our convention theme this year centers on a Marian controversy that absorbs public attention, at least our attention and that of fellow-theologians, at the very time that the pastoral is being prepared.

The first of these reasons needs no further justification. Though it is recognized that our Society bears primarily a scholarly orientation and attempts "to promote an exchange of views on Marian doctrine and to further studies and research in Mariology," the Society cannot remain aloof from any kerygmatic initiative that promises effectively to bring to a wider audience that Marian doctrine about which the Society is most concerned.

The second reason I have alleged, however, for speaking of the pastoral program at a convention discussing the Virginal Conception controversy probably requires some clarification. My thought is this. Controversy puts us on the defensive. It seems at times, indeed, that almost any phase of the Marian question today arouses defensive reactions precisely among those most concerned about the Virgin Mary and her place in theology, in the Church, and in the life of the Christian. Obviously one must not be apathetic when an issue is genuinely joined. On the other hand, apart from the martyr's sacrifice, the defensive posture is not the most radiating witness to the good news of the Gospel. Vatican II in several places righted an imbalance in reminding us that the Church's duty with regard to revelation is to proclaim it, faithfully expound it, and, where necessary, defend it—in that order. How much more effectively, for example, would the sacrament of Confirmation have been proclaimed if instead of being long presented in the West as an anointing with strength unto fighting as a soldier of Christ it had been seen, as more recently in the West and traditionally in the East, in terms of communicating to others Christ's Holy Spirit, His first gift to those who believe, a gift received again in this sacrament in order to be further given by joyful witness. Again, was it not after the heat of controversy over the Immaculate Conception had subsided that the mystery was proclaimed for belief to the entire Church amid accents of quiet joy rather than as the resolution of a debate? One recalls, too, the serene optimism of Pope John XXIII—

perhaps especially today, ten years afterwards, one needs to recall it—when at the Council's opening session he observed, "We see, in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of men follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun" (October 11, 1962). To cite a final example, the fourth century was marked by clamorous controversies similar to those of our day on the Virgin Birth and on Mary's perpetual virginity; yet the same century experienced a discovery of Mary as model of the dedicated life and as the one who prays to the Lord for those in need—a discovery of far more consequence than the controversies.

At this convention the generous collaboration of scholars from outside the Catholic tradition will enrich our understanding of the mystery of the Virgin Birth. Their invaluable presence with us is a reminder how the lines of controversy are redrawn or often erased. As in these talks attention is directed to one facet of the charter of Mary, today called into question, it is important not to lose sight of the whole portrait of who she is in the mystery of Christ and of the Church and in the life of the Christian. It is even more important to give expression to that full and transcendent beauty, confidently and not in simply a defensive mode. Since undoubtedly the pastoral will do this, it seemed worth bringing it to our attention in relation to the controverted subject we are about to enter on in our convention talks.

Of course, as we await the pastoral, each of us has his or her portrait of Mary, his or her preferred way of explaining Mary's place in the mystery of Christ and the Church; Mary's role in the life of the Christian will perhaps be all the more marked by our personal approach. What has continued to impress me during this postconciliar period of uneasy searching for a solid Marian synthesis is the double foundation for it offered by Vatican II in Chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*. Mary is model and intercessor. Since these qualities are preeminently

found in Christ, it is at once clear that she has them only in participation and subordination to Him. Since all the saints, who are Christ's glory, are models toward us and intercede for us, it is also clear that these two qualities befit in surpassing measure the one who is first among the saints. Since the Church herself is sacrament of salvation—that is, sign and means of salvation—the same two orders of causality, exemplary and instrumental, reappear; in the Church we are called through our lives to signify and communicate God's saving plan to all mankind, praying for all.

Greater emphasis is currently being laid on Mary's role as model, rather than on her intercession. If, as is probable, this helps to reveal how close she is to the Christian, it would seem advisable to use this approach, while not repudiating her transcendence or the depth of mystery into which she is plunged. It is, in fact, very necessary to see her as model, since in being taken up into Christ's mystery as one who was and remained only human, she exemplifies aspects of the Christian life for which one cannot properly look to Christ, who is both human and divine, the Word made flesh.

She is, first of all, the model of faith. The thought has become so familiar, thanks to attention focused on the New Testament picture of Mary, as not to require further development at this point. What is perhaps to be noted is that when in the mystery of Christ she is not seen precisely as the one who is there believing, the effort is made to present Christ Himself as model of faith, to make Him out as radically ignorant of His mission and character and as knowing Himself and His mission only through faith. In other words, when Mary's place in the Whole Christ is not appreciated, Christ Himself is misapprehended by being interpreted in the exclusively human terms that are proper to Mary and to the rest of us.

Again, she is seen as a model of love. At first hearing, this would seem certainly to be an unnecessary duplication of a role with which Christ Himself is identified to a degree unsur-

passable. No more compelling model of love than Christ has ever existed. Yet here again there is a dimension of love which Mary is called upon to exemplify in the mystery of the Whole Christ. Christ indeed summons us to love one another as He has loved us. But He is not heard in the same vein exhorting us to love the Father as He loves the Father, for He loves the Father from within the intimacy of Trinitarian life where we enter only by adoption. In the days of His life among us the Gospels do not portray Him loving the Father as if only seeing through a glass darkly or as through faith trusting in the Father whose design He cannot possibly grasp. Mary loved God in this way, which is the way of the rest of us in the Whole Christ. Yet here, too, there is a modality of love proper to all of us that is not exemplified in either Christ's love for the Father or Mary's: ours is a repentant love, a turning back to the Father from whom we strayed. The rest of the saints are our models in this respect. Thus only when the Whole Christ is kept in view can all the dimensions of exemplary causality be apprehended and Mary's own role as model rightly situated.

The other foundation on which rests the brief synthesis being sketched here is in the order of instrumental causality and intercession, complementing what has been said of exemplary causality. Toward the end of his presidential address last year Monsignor Vaughan proposed a hypothesis to which I should fully subscribe; he is of the opinion

"that there is no effective exemplary causality of salvation (on the part of Christ, Mary, the saints, the Church), without a practical belief in instrumental causality and intercession; and that the model disappears unless the ties with it are vital and living and real. Intercession makes the difference between a plaster image (like a picture of Whistler's Mother) and the loving concern of a real mother of our own. To put it another way, if Mary or the Church or even Christ Himself is not regarded as a real intercessor, then none of them will remain as a model for long."

With the stress placed on Mary as model, then, it is essential to proclaim also that she intercedes for us, and that her intercession is simply Christ's taking her up into His own eternal act of interceding for us, in which He involves her and all the saints in the kingdom, as well as the Church on earth—all taken up to become not only beneficiaries of His love but participants in it. If love on earth finds expression in loving concern for others, the fulfillment of love in the kingdom must contain some form of this concern. It is interesting to note how in two successive sentences the Fathers of Vatican II grappled with the task of conveying to the modern mind a notion of Mary's prayer for us: "Taken up to heaven . . . by her manifold acts of intercession she continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation." And then immediately, "By her maternal charity Mary cares for the brethren of her Son who will journey on earth. . . ." (*Lumen Gentium* 62). The second formulation of Mary's intercession as loving concern seemed to please them more since they cited it—and significantly, in the light of the bond between model and intercession—when presenting Mary to the laity as "the perfect example of the spiritual and apostolic life" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4). Similar discernment of new ways of expressing the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith (cf. John XXIII, First Address to Vatican II, 10/11/62) concerning intercession is incumbent on the Mariologist today if he is to make his contribution in accents other than those of controversy.

For, again, my point in speaking to you about the forthcoming Marian pastoral and in sketching, however briefly, a synthesis of Marian doctrine is simply to help us keep our vision open to the broader panorama as we come to grips with one of the Marian controversies reborn in our day. The field of Marian research and scholarship, we gladly recognize, beckons far beyond the kind of question we are about to take up. That it should have to be taken up must be recognized as a challenge and sign of the times. But if controversy is, as so

commonly today, the task of the hour, let us only remember not to deprive ourselves of enjoying the full beauty of her in whose cause the contest is joined—or, better said, the full beauty of the mystery of Christ into which she was taken as Virgin Mother and servant of her Lord.