

# Marian Studies

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## Words of Welcome

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## WORDS OF WELCOME

THE MOST REVEREND THOMAS A. DONNELLAN, D.D.  
*Archbishop of Atlanta*

It is a joy to welcome you to Atlanta...for your own presence but, also, for the exemplary tradition of service to the Church by the Mariological Society. When Saint Paul evaluates the charisms, he makes clear that they are not given for the benefit of individuals but for the good of the community which is the Church. The same should be true of learned ecclesiastical societies. They are in service to the Church.

When the United States Bishops put together their directives on *Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education*, they pointed out that religious instruction should lead students to see Mary as singularly blessed and relevant to their own lives and needs. From my observation, your Society has served well towards such an end.

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the *Constitution on the Church* admonished all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered. They went on to say: "But this Synod earnestly exhorts theologians and preachers of the divine word that in treating of the unique dignity of the Mother of God, they carefully and equally avoid the falsity of exaggeration on the one hand, and the excess of narrow mindedness on the other. Pursuing the study of Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers, the doctors and liturgies of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's teaching authority, let them rightly explain the offices and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which are always related to Christ, the Source of all truth, sanctity and piety." These words could serve as a charter of your Society and, indeed, a description of its accomplishments.

Just a year ago, our Holy Father in the Apostolic Exhortation *Mariialis Cultus*, offered directives for your future activity. He spoke of the need for a renewal of the forms in which devotion to Our Lady is expressed, for an emphasis on the elements that are ever new, and the need to incorporate the doctrinal data obtained from the theological reflection and the proposals of the Church's magisterium. He spoke, too, of the need to promote a genuine creative activity and concluded by indicating that the purpose of the directives was to make Marian devotion ever more pure and vigorous.

Because your Society has served the Church in a unique and outstanding way to implement these directives of the Holy Father, it is a special joy for me to bid you welcome to Atlanta.