

The Catholic Lawyer

Volume 26
Number 3 *Volume 26, Summer 1981, Number 3*

Article 3

September 2017

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Monsignor Thomas Leonard, Associate General Secretary, United States Catholic Conference

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Recommended Citation

Monsignor Thomas Leonard, Associate General Secretary, United States Catholic Conference (1981)
"Welcoming Remarks," *The Catholic Lawyer*. Vol. 26 : No. 3 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://scholarship.law.stjohns.edu/tcl/vol26/iss3/3>

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DIOCESAN ATTORNEYS' PAPERS

WELCOMING REMARKS

MONSIGNOR THOMAS LEONARD, UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

It is a pleasure to welcome the Diocesan Attorneys to Washington and to our annual meeting. I am here on behalf of Bishop Kelly, who is the General Secretary of the Conference. Bishop Kelly has two main jobs in life. The first is that he is the General Secretary of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and second, he is the Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, D.C. The recent departure of Cardinal Baum, the Archbishop of Washington, has left many events in the archdiocesan calendar uncovered. Hence, Bishop Kelly's absence this morning. He is ordaining this morning and confirming twice this afternoon. But he did ask me to send to you his best wishes for a very successful meeting.

I have spent the last 17 years at the Conference and most of my time has been spent working with diocesan constituencies of one sort or another. It has been the primary part of my work. The liaison between the diocesan staff and the national staff is one of the most important functions of the Conference. It ensures that decisions made on the national level as well as the decisions that each of you are called upon to make in your respective dioceses are not made without reference to the impact they have on the rest of the Church. That is why I think these meetings are so important. I have always enjoyed attending meetings of the conference staff and their diocesan counterparts since they remind me that not all of the talent or answers are to be found at the USCC. They also remind me of the diversity of the problems that exist in the dioceses—the diversity that makes the Church and the work of the USCC so exciting and rich. I am also reminded of how dependent we are at the national office on the dioceses for achieving the goals and objectives of the United States Bishops. Finally, I am reminded by meetings such as this how generous you are with your talent and time. So, for all of your good will, I am personally and deeply indebted. For all of your help, we on the staff of the USCC are most grateful, and we hope that you will enjoy your meet-

ing and that it will be profitable.

When I came to the Conference 17 years ago, George Reed had already been here 18 years. George has been, I am tempted to say, a fixture, but that is not the right word. He has been a most valuable member of the bishops' staff for over 35 years. We are all aware that George has retired from the position of General Counsel. I would publicly like to acknowledge my respect for Mr. Reed. I also thought it would be appropriate, as an indication of the esteem that the bishops have for Mr. Reed, to read a resolution passed at their annual meeting 2 weeks ago. The resolution reads as follows:

Few persons have served the Catholic Church in the United States longer at the national level and none has served better than George Reed. The Administrative Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Administrative Board of the United States Catholic Conference take the occasion of his retirement as General Counsel of the two conferences to express their deep appreciation for a career outstanding for its dedication and professional distinction. Joining the legal staff of the National Catholic Welfare Conference in 1943, Mr. Reed subsequently served as Associate General Counsel, Acting General Counsel and General Counsel. Over a span of nearly 4 decades his contributions both to the law and to the Church have been enormous. An outstanding legal scholar as well as practicing attorney, he has made particularly significant contributions to constitutional law in the area of Church-state relations. His efforts have not been limited to the theoretical level, however, for he has rendered countless practical services to the dioceses, Church-related schools, hospitals and other institutions, and through them to the Church as a whole. Over and above his professional achievements, Mr. Reed has brought to his work such personal characteristics as intelligence, commitment, and a deep love for the Church. And paying tribute to him we salute not only a skilled practitioner of the law, but an exemplary Christian gentleman. He has our admiration, our gratitude, and our prayers in the years to come.

So ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to thank Mr. Reed, our former General Counsel, and to extend him every best wish.