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After Twenty-Five Years

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AFTER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Presidential Address

Twenty-five years ago today the Mariological Society of America assembled at this very hour for its first convention at the Catholic University of America. In planning this year's twenty-fifth convention the Board of Directors asked the president to devote his address to a resumé of the Society's quarter-century history.

Someone has quipped that history is the lie perpetuated by the winners, and that for the truth you must resort to the folklore preserved by the losers. If then today the impression sometimes prevails that battle has been joined in Mary's cause, one attempting to write honestly of our past may find himself in a quandary, whether he considers himself winning or losing. More appositely Kierkegaard has suggested that although life must be lived forwards, it can be understood only backwards. So, winner or loser, history or folklore, glance backwards or thrust forwards, our story goes something like this.

The Mariological Society of America was the initiative of Father Juniper B. Carol, O.F.M. and thirty-eight other priests who laid the foundation at an evening meeting of October 11, 1949 in the library of Holy Name College in Washington and set the first convention for less than three months later.

National Mariological societies were in the air at that time. The French and Dutch societies had been formed in 1934, the former reviving in full strength after World War II. Meanwhile the Spanish society had come into existence in 1940. The year of our own foundation saw a Canadian and a German Mariological society born. In 1954 a Mexican and in 1959 a Polish and a Colombian society completed the roll of the principal groups. Through the years only the French, Spanish, and

American societies have continued to meet annually and publish their proceedings.

Our Society's twenty-fifth convention brings members for the third time in the last six years to the St. Petersburg-Tampa area to enjoy the gracious hospitality of the Diocese of St. Petersburg and its Ordinary, one of our episcopal members, Bishop Charles McLaughlin. Seventeen other cities have hosted conventions: Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Dayton (2), Detroit, Kansas City, Louisville, North Palm Beach, New Orleans, New York (3), Paterson, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, St. Louis (2), San Antonio, Washington (2) where the Society was founded, and Worcester, first see of its episcopal chairman, Cardinal Wright. Thus seventeen times the Society has met in the eastern or north central states, only twice west of St. Louis, and six times in the south, four of them in Florida.

Of these twenty-five conventions nineteen have centered on some theme of Marian study, from the first convention through the seventeenth, and again at the twenty-first and the twenty-fourth. A listing of the themes reflects the general trend characteristic of Mariology today away from an analysis of Mary's privileges in the earlier conventions toward a more functional study of her place in salvation history in the later conventions, along with attention to ecumenism and, in recent conventions, to the debate over the virginal conception.

The nineteen themes in the order of their appearance at conventions are the following: Mariology as a science, Coredemption, Spiritual Maternity, Universal Queenship, Immaculate Conception, Divine Motherhood, Virginité, Mary's Death, Mary and the Church, The Fundamental Principle of Mariology, Mary in the Gospels, Mary in the Old Testament, The Spirit of Virginité, Mary's Holiness, Mary and Ecumenism, Mary in Salvation History (two consecutive conventions), and most recently in both the 1970 and 1973 conventions, The Virginal Conception.

Papers and addresses at the conventions have varied in num-

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ber between four (at the opening convention) and seven, a generally busy two days' schedule. After the first convention for six consecutive years the program offered four talks and from two to four selective seminars. Thereafter seven papers and two prepared reactions were featured at the longest convention program, seven papers at two others, six papers and reactions or a panel at two more conventions, six papers at nine others, and five papers at four of the shortest conventions. A noteworthy part of the convention program in the afternoon of the opening of each of the first ten conventions was a Holy Hour, frequently presided over by the hosting bishop and often featuring a bishop as homilist.

A summary picture of the convention program appears from the following chart:

PATTERN OF CONVENTIONS

	Presidential Address	Papers	Selective or Other	
			Seminars	Events
1950	—	4	—	
1951	—	4	4	
1952	—	4	4	
1953	—	4	3	(1 unpublished)
1954	—	4 (1 unpublished)	3	(1 unpublished)
1955	—	4	3	
1956	—	4 (1 unpublished)	2	(1 unpublished)
1957	—	6 (1 unpublished)	—	
1958	—	4	1	(1 unpublished)
1959	—	6 (1 unpublished)		
1960	—	5		
1961	1	6		
1962	1	5		
1963	—	5 (1 unpublished)		
1964	1	5		
1965	1	5		
1966	—	5		

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1967	1	6 (1 unpublished)	
1968	1	5	3 reactions (1 unpublished)
1969	1	6	2 reactions
1970	1	5	
1971	1	5 (2 unpublished)	1 3-person panel 1 panelist's remarks unpub- lished
1972	1 (unpublished)	5	
1973	1	4 (1 unpublished)	1 record of discus- sions
1974	1	5	

The convention proceedings, virtually in their entirety, have appeared in 24 volumes of *Marian Studies*, coming off the press with unusual dispatch thanks to the unrelenting zeal of the editor, who for twenty-three of these volumes—1970 is the exception—has been our long-time secretary and founding father of the Society, Father Juniper Carol. Following a pattern initiated in the first two volumes by the Society's earliest secretary, Father Joseph Fenton, Father Carol has likewise prefaced each volume of *Marian Studies* with his report on the convention—a report that, although written by him as secretary, does not purport to be an official record of convention minutes but rather his own reaction to the papers and discussions.

The bulk of these 24 volumes of *Marian Studies* comprises 4123 pages of text, exclusive of the final pages of each volume that give the treasurer's report and the membership roster. Thus an average of 176 pages of Marian scholarship has been offered in each volume. Four volumes (1952, 1961, 1970, and 1954) have gone beyond 200 pages; 10 volumes have ranged between 150 and 200 pages; 9 volumes between 100 and 150 pages; and only one (1964) has contained slightly less than 100 pages of text.

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The papers and addresses published in these 24 volumes number 160. Fifteen additional papers presented at the conventions did not, for one reason or another, find their way to publication. The 160 published papers and addresses represent the scholarship and interest of 119 authors, distributed as follows:

- 27 from among the diocesan clergy have published 35 papers;
- 84 religious priests have published 115 papers;
 - 1 Orthodox priest has published 2 papers;
 - 4 Protestant ministers have published 5 papers;
 - 3 Catholic women (2 religious, 1 lay) have published 3 papers.

Since the membership counts so many of the religious clergy it may be of interest to note the extent to which priests of the several congregations and orders have published in *Marian Studies*:

	Papers			Papers	
	Scholars published			Scholars published	
AA	1	1	OMI	2	2
CMF	1	1	OP	13	14
CP	4	7	OSA	1	1
CSB	1	1	OSB	3	4
CSC	1	3	OSM	2	2
CSP	2	2	SA	2	2
CSsP	1	1	SJ	15	19
CSsR	6	6	SM (Marianist)	7	10
O CARM	3	14	SM (Marist)	1	1
OCD	1	1	SMM	1	1
OFM	9	12	SS	1	1
OFM Cap	3	5	SVD	1	2
OFM Conv	1	1			

The Society's By-Laws (art. 7) designate *Marian Studies* as the "official organ of the Society" and specify that it "shall con-

tain the papers presented at the annual meeting." Studies apart from those on the annual convention programs have appeared on only five occasions in the earlier volumes, twice in 1950 and 1952 each and once in 1955. Often, of course, the text appearing in *Marian Studies* has been an expanded version of what was delivered within the limits of a rigidly enforced 30-minute period allowed each speaker on the convention program.

It is impossible to estimate the reading public of *Marian Studies* nor have I ascertained the press run of each volume. Earlier 1500 copies of each volume were printed, of late from 500 to 750. Eight volumes are out of print. The Society takes legitimate pride in its uninterrupted publication of 24 years of serious Marian scholarship offered at very low price.

What is less satisfying is the record of attendance at the conventions which were the stimulus for publication. In half of his annual reports the secretary has included estimates of attendance or remarks thereon. In lieu of more accurate attendance figures it may serve to scan his observations as the years advanced: 1951 "average 120"; 1957: "approximately 125"; 1959: "about 100"; 1960: "over 120, a larger number than at any of our previous meetings"; 1963: "about 150 priests plus a few sisters and seminarians"; 1965: "attendance . . . disappointing"; 1966: concern was expressed from the floor at the poor attendance; 1967: "considering the enormous distance . . . very well attended"; 1968: "surprisingly good, considering the inclement weather"; 1969: the president formally expressed concern over steadily decreasing convention attendance over the last several years; 1970: "approximately 60 members and guests"; the president repeated his concern of the previous year; 1971: "attendance at the various sessions fluctuated between 80 and 90 persons."

So many factors influence convention attendance, not the least of them the rising cost of travel and accommodations, that hardly more can be said here than what the record says for itself. But whatever our present travail, we *do* have the consola-

tion of having survived worse convention contretemps, as, for example, in 1957 when 125 members assembled in Chicago to learn first that, of the officers elected at the previous convention, the president had been transferred to the Philippines and the vice-president had died suddenly; secondly, that 43 on the roster had forfeited membership the previous year; and finally, that the first paper on the convention program would not be delivered because the keynote speaker, to cite the harassed secretary, "had wired his inability to attend the meeting due to a sudden illness." All this at the opening session in the presence of an Auxiliary representing the Cardinal Archbishop, who himself later came to preside over the Holy Hour.

To those of juridical inclination a constitutional problem of sorts presents itself relative to convention attendance. Originally the Constitutions (1950) ambitiously stated that "one-fourth of the total active membership shall constitute a quorum" at the annual business meeting which is part of each convention program (Art. 3, sect. 3). In the By-Laws operative since 1954 the sights had to be lowered: "One-fifth of the total active membership shall constitute a quorum" (Art. 5, sect. 3). The Society's principal and ex-officio member, once alert at Cana and eschatologically present at our meetings, must frequently of late have had occasion to remark to her Son, "They have no quorum." And indeed, a miracle would help us.

The ecumenical dimension of the Society's convention programs has generally followed the openness stimulated by Vatican II. Two papers anticipated the Council's ecumenical stance: a seminar in 1956 on "Non-Catholic Attitudes toward Mary's Perpetual Virginity" and the presidential address in 1962 on "The Mariologist as Ecumenist." In 1967 for the first time a Protestant scholar addressed the convention. He was the late Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, who died last December 13 after having suffered a heart attack the evening before while conducting a course on "Jesus the Savior" with the Catholic Chairman of the Archdiocesan Com-

mission on Ecumenism at St. Monica's Church in St. Louis. Dr. Piepkorn was also the first non-Catholic member of our Society. His articulate erudition and openly professed love of Our Lady, fresh in our memory from last year's convention will continue to inspire us as we remember him prayerfully. Dr. Piepkorn's address to the 1967 convention came two years, incidentally, before a woman scholar appeared on the program. He was followed in 1968 by an Orthodox priest and two Protestant colleagues. Two Episcopalians were on the 1969 program. The 1970 Survey of Mariological Literature featured non-Catholic scholarship and the longest paper ever to appear in *Marian Studies* discussed that year the question "Was Luther a Marian Devotee?" In 1972 an Orthodox scholar made his second appearance at a convention. The two Protestant scholars who in 1973 read papers were the focus of the convention program.

It thus emerges that the convention of 1971 is the only one of the last seven conventions which has not included a paper by a non-Roman Catholic scholar or an explicit treatment of non-Roman Catholic Marian thought.

The charge of presiding over the first twenty-five conventions has been entrusted to eleven presidents of the Society: Revs. Carol (the only one reelected), Vollert, LeFrois, Carroll, Burghardt, O'Connor, Shea, Most, Maguire, Vaughan, and Neumann. After the first four years, during which he discharged the president's duties, Father Juniper Carol has served as the Society's secretary. The only other comparable instance of such uninterrupted dedication to the Society in an official capacity is the record of John J. Cardinal Wright who since the second year of the Society's existence has appeared at the head of its membership roster as its Episcopal Chairman. Cardinal Wright's constant and enthusiastic support of the Society has through the years taken a variety of forms, some of which his modesty forbids mentioning further than in the simple acknowledgment that has traditionally appeared toward the end of the secretary's annual convention report. At earlier conventions before

other duties intervened Bishop Wright was himself present and frequently spoke on the program, in both scholarly dissertation and address or homily. Since those years each president could bear witness to the letters of encouragement our Episcopal Chairman has taken time to write.

The yearly convention has, of course, been the highlight of the Society's activity these 25 years as it pursues its objective "to promote an exchange of views on Marian doctrines and to further studies and research in Mariology" (1950 Constitutions, art. 1), or in terms of the current By-Laws, to foster "study and dissemination of theological doctrines relating to the Virgin Mary" (Art. 3). Four other undertakings involving year-round effort, however, seem deserving of mention.

Seventeen times in the 24 years to date a Mariological Award—designated since 1971 the Cardinal Wright Award in honor of the donor who from beginning anonymously funded the award—has been bestowed on some scholar working in the United States in recognition of his contribution to Marian study. The award was conferred 13 times uninterruptedly from 1952 to 1964, then after a year's lapse three times more, but since 1968 only once. Recipients have been, in the order of their recognition, Revs. Carol, Sebastian, Monheim, Matuszewski, LeFrois, Unger, Vollert, Burghardt, Carroll, Most, Shea, O'Connor, Dougherty, Casado, Neumann, Wessels, and Craghan.

From 1953 through 1961 a Seminarians' Award, likewise of cash value, was conferred on the authors of outstanding essays on a topic designated annually. Three seminarians were recipients each of the first three years, and one in each of the seven following years.

For a period of ten consecutive years (1958-1967) regional meetings of members and interested guests were held between the conventions. During each of the first three years these meetings numbered three: In 1958 at Washington (34 participants, 2 papers), Darlington (34 participants, 2 discussions), and Worcester (32 participants, 3 seminars); in 1959 at Wash-

ington (45 participants, 2 papers), Darlington (40 participants, 2 papers), and Dayton (13 participants, 1 paper); in 1960 at Washington, Boston, and Dayton. By recent standards these would qualify as mini-conventions from the viewpoint of attendance.

In a fourth initiative quietly undertaken by a team of four members, help was provided the American bishops in drafting and reediting (in four revisions over two years) the collective Marian pastoral entitled *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith* that appeared November 21, 1973. An average of 35 members also promised assistance of some sort (conferences, lectures, articles, organization) in an effort by the Marian Center of San Francisco to promote nation-wide acceptance of the Marian pastoral in this Holy Year of 1974.

Active membership in the Society has from its foundation been open to "priests interested in promoting studies and research in Mariology" (By-Laws, art. 1). In addition, two non-Catholic ministers, after having addressed recent conventions, have been welcomed into active membership. Other persons or organizations wishing in some manner to promote the work of the Society enjoy associate membership. Rosters of both groups of members are appended annually to *Marian Studies*.

A tabulation of the 1973 roster shows that the active members presently number 212, down 129 from the high point of 341 reached in 1965. It should be observed, however, that the latter figure probably represents a larger membership than actually existed, since at that time no strict application was being made of the provision of the By-Laws that members who fail to pay their dues for two consecutive years are liable to forfeiture of membership. Enforcement of that provision would have revealed possibly that the active members never exceeded 300 in the Society's history. At any rate, the published roster of 1967, which had dropped to 312, plummeted in 1968 to 235, largely because the provision for membership forfeiture was being applied. Of recent years the most disconcerting drop was from

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1971-72 when active members fell from 252 to 210. The number for the year just concluded, 212, would itself probably be smaller by 10 or 15 if the custom were abandoned of allowing a year or so of grace to delinquent members before acting on the forfeiture clause.

Membership figures from the rosters in *Marian Studies* for the 24 years just concluded are as follows:

	Active Members	Associate Members		Active Members	Associate Members
1950	131	5	1962	331	71
1951	139	9	1963	335	67
1952	220	25	1964	322	65
1953	246	37	1965	341	61
1954	267	50	1966	324	54
1955	278	54	1967	312	55
1956	272	54	1968	235	45
1957	284	54	1969	240	46
1958	301	58	1970	242	43
1959	319	63	1971	252	50
1960	317	65	1972	210	55
1961	330	61	1973	212	56

A glance at the above chart will show that after a steady growth during its first ten years the Society recorded its most impressive and, as indicated, possibly inflated numbers through the years 1960 to 1965, and that it has since declined in numbers over the last ten years. It still, however, retains almost two-thirds of the highest number of active members recorded.

Put in still other terms, the Society counted 131 active members at its foundation and 138 in its second year. For the next six years, until 1957, its active members were in the 200's; from 1958 to 1967 in the over 300's; since 1967 in the lower 200's.

The number of associate members has shown greater con-

stancy. From 5 at the Society's foundation the associates increased steadily to a high of 71 in 1962, after which there was a decline to 43 in 1970, and thereafter, in contrast to the pattern of active membership, a gentle growth to 56 at present.

The status of the Society's active membership gives cause for concern but not yet alarm. Obviously years like 1954 and 1963 when there were respectively 54 and 27 applications for membership present a seemingly unmatchable record. On the other hand, even in those prosperous years it was announced, for example, that 20 had forfeited membership in 1955, and 43 in 1956.

What emerges from this analysis is that the Society is fortunate in retaining a core of loyal and dedicated active members. How to recruit more and younger members to assure the Society's future is a question beyond the present sketch. It would seem, however, that the restriction of active membership to priests could very well be reappraised. Our own convention experience of enrichment from our Protestant colleagues since 1967 and the tacit amendment of the By-Laws twice in their favor suggest extending them a more publicized invitation to membership. Likewise, does there remain any unimpeachable reason for not welcoming religious (of both sexes) who are not ordained and laity to active membership, if they have the scholarly interest in "promoting studies and research in Mariology," the only qualification expected of priest applicants?

In other words, could active and associate membership not be differentiated in terms not of the priestly character but simply of the promotion of "studies and research" vis-a-vis a more general desire "in some way to promote the work of the Society"? (By-Laws, art. 1).

A reappraisal of this matter could suggest amending the By-Laws. It is remarkable, one might note in passing, that never in the history of the Society have either the original Constitution (1950) or the By-Laws operative since 1954 been amended

on any point, though procedures of course exist (By-Laws, art. 8, cf. *Marian Studies* 6:1955, p. 20).

Obviously, in raising these possibilities we have ceased to present history and should bring our task to a close. As we do so, however, a final area of discussion invites our attention. I refer to the image of our Society, a crucial factor in our increasingly image-conscious culture. What occasions my observation is the curious phenomenon just uncovered. Our constitutional structure has remained what the pen left it 20 years and more ago. Yet we live in an age in which change, change in the religious sphere included, has been singled out by the Fathers of Vatican II as the most dramatic of the signs of our time: "a true social and cultural transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well" (*Gaudium et Spes* 4:2). As we discussed membership, Cardinal Newman's insight could have come hauntingly to mind: "Growth is the only evidence of life." In this broader context into which we have entered, his other word applies: "To grow is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed very often."

Is part of our trouble not precisely the impression that to Mary and things Marian there too readily clings the image of a past which older persons regret losing, while the younger feel little attraction to something portrayed simply as a past now apparently slipping from grasp?

In this era of change, so critical for interest in Mary, our concern might then profitably center on the image we project of our Society. If the Society becomes repeatedly the focus, so to say, on sensitivity or hyper-sensitivity to every development genuinely or supposedly anti-Marian, it cannot long endure in health, any more than a member of the body if all it does is register pain.

Vigorously defending a grasp of something of the mystery of Mary attained in the past may not always accomplish as much as allowing time for something of that same mystery to dawn on persons who have not had the chance to live in or

know the past and who, as do we all, delight more in discovering for themselves than in being taught by others.

To conclude, could we put it this way: The Catholic Church has long tried to live up to its responsibility of proclaiming God's truth. We have heard His truth about Mary staunchly defended down into our own day. But the God of truth is also a God of beauty. Is not our challenge now to make the image of His Mother and ours so beautiful that the person alive today finds himself wanting to see with his own eyes who she is, and in the process feels himself being led to her Son?

If 25 years of our history tell us anything, it is that the challenge is worth our effort as we move forward.

REV. CHARLES W. NEUMANN, S.M.