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Report on the San Antonio Convention

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REPORT ON THE SAN ANTONIO CONVENTION

As we approach the challenging task of chronicling the San Antonio convention, we are encouraged by the helpful remark once made by a distinguished newspaperman (W. Pegler?) that the easiest assignment a reporter could be given would be to cover an event he had not himself witnessed.¹ In our case, what could be easier than to follow the printed program and to rely on bits of information based on hearsay?

Our first convention in the Lone Star State was held at Our Lady of the Pillar, Christian Renewal Centre, in San Antonio on Monday and Tuesday, January 3 and 4, 1972. The Centre is staffed by a group of young Marianist Sisters who, incidentally, left nothing undone in order to give the delegates—especially the ailing one—more than a taste of that warm hospitality for which the South is deservedly known. The success of the meeting, let us say it at the outset, was due in large measure to the genial and efficient Fr. Charles W. Neumann, S.M., who seemed to have nothing else to do but to accommodate and entertain everyone in sight.

His Excellency, the Most Reverend Francis J. Furey, Archbishop of San Antonio, officially opened the convention at ten o'clock on Monday morning. While extending a cordial welcome to the delegates, he drew their attention to the significant motto he had selected upon becoming a bishop, namely: "*Ipsam sequens, non devias,*" which freely translated means: "Following Mary, we are on the right path." He elaborated on how the

¹ We did travel to San Antonio, looking forward to an exciting meeting, but a sudden indisposition regrettably prevented us from attending a single lecture!

truth of his motto had abundant endorsement in the teaching of the recent Vatican Council relative to Mary's important role in our lives.

Following the Archbishop's brief talk and the presidential address by Msgr. Austin B. Vaughan, the delegates heard the keynote speaker, Marianist Father Charles W. Neumann, discuss the decline of interest in Mariology as a theological problem. The speaker analyzed with penetrating insight the various causes of the unfortunate situation we face today, suggested some timely antidotes, and concluded with a note of hope and optimism. All in all, a well-balanced paper, noted for its soundness of judgment, and for its restraint in evaluating what he regarded an extremist solutions.² The discussion leader was Fr. Frederick M. Jelly, O.P. of Washington, D.C.

The afternoon session opened with the election of officers and Board members. The unanimously elected slate follows:

President: Fr. Charles W. Neumann, S.M.; *Vice-President:* Fr. George F. Kirwin, O.M.I. (re-elected); *Secretary:* Fr. Juniper Carol, O.F.M. (re-elected); *Treasurer:* Fr. James Forgac, O.S.B. (re-elected). *Board of Directors:* Fr. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm. and Fr. Theodore A. Koehler, S.M., replacing Fr. Roger M. Charest, S.M.M. and Fr. Bernard Lazor, O.S.B. For a one-year term: Fr. Eric May, O.F.M.Cap., replacing Msgr. William F. Hogan who had requested withdrawal from the Board.

Immediately after the election, the program featured a lecture on Mary's spiritual maternity after Vatican II by Fr. Theodore A. Koehler, S.M., Director of the famed Marian Library at the University of Dayton. The well-known Marianist, who has devoted many years of serious study to this particular subject,

² Not everyone, of course, will be particularly sympathetic to Donal Flanagan's minimistic definition of Mariology, quoted (approvingly?) by Fr. Neumann in Section III, No. 4, corresponding to footnote 40; and much less to George Tavard's strange suggestion that the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, and papal infallibility may belong to the "formulation" of dogma, rather than to the deposit of faith itself.

surveyed the more important and relevant publications since the recent ecumenical council, and pointed out new fruitful avenues for considering Our Lady's relationship to us as her children, the most rewarding of them being a fresh look into the theology of the Holy Spirit in its bearing on our rebirth as children of God. In the absence of Fr. William G. Most, the exchange of ideas following the lecture was moderated by Fr. Matthew F. Morry, O.P.

The traditional "happy hour" and banquet, usually held at noon, were held this time at 5:30 in the evening. Archbishop Furrey, who had left the meeting immediately after his official welcome in the morning, returned to the Centre to preside over the banquet and, as he put it, "to have an opportunity to get acquainted with as many delegates as possible."

The first session on Monday began at 9:30 with an illuminating dissertation by the Very Rev. Alexander Schmemmann on Our Lady and the Holy Spirit. The speaker is the distinguished dean of the theology department of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in Tuckahoe, N.Y. The main point of his paper was that the Mariological decline we witness today will not be overcome unless Mariology is no longer viewed as a "devotional" department of the Church, but as an integrated part of Pneumatology. He explained in what sense the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Mary is both unique and archetypal, and went on to show how if the Holy Spirit is the one who "reveals" Mary to us, it is she who "reveals" Him to us. Incidentally, while discussing the action of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the speaker had some priceless words of warning to those activists today who confuse theology with sociology; who view the Church as an agency of social reform and worldly service; who use the Holy Spirit as a kind of *alibi* for dissent and rebellion, anarchy and subjectivism; who are always knocking down the institutionalism and the structures of the Church.—A timely warning indeed! The discussion elicited by Fr. Schmemmann's

paper was ably led by Fr. Eric May, O.F.M.Cap., the highly esteemed biblical scholar from Garrison, N.Y.

After a ten-minute intermission, the delegates were eager to hear Dr. Josephine Massingberd Ford, of Notre Dame University, on the rather difficult but topical theme: *Our Lady and the Ministry of Women in the Church*. The lecturer—petite, soft-spoken, almost self-effacing—had a lot of surprises in store for those unacquainted with her impressive intellectual equipment. A scholar of note, she can baffle her audiences with her remarkable knowledge of Sacred Scripture, rabbinical literature, religious art and related disciplines. Her dissertation will prove most stimulating, not only to our good Catholic women, but to Bible students in general. As expected, Dr. Ford's views and suggestions called forth several thought-provoking comments from the floor. Fr. George T. Montague, S.M., of St. Mary's University in San Antonio, acted as moderator.

The last general assembly was given over to a report on the recent Mariological Congress held in Zagreb, Yugoslavia. It was prepared and read by Fr. Eamon R. Carroll, O.Carm., and commented upon by Fr. Alban A. Maguire, O.F.M., both of whom were privileged to travel to Tito's Communist "Paradise" in order to obtain first-hand information on what actually went on.

A brief business meeting followed Fr. Carroll's paper. After Fr. James Forgac, O.S.B., treasurer, informed the audience of the dwindling financial assets of the organization, the president, Fr. Neumann, told the assembled guests that, in accordance with a decision of the Board of Directors, the next convention would be held, *Deo volente*, in St. Louis, Mo., on Wednesday and Thursday, January 3 and 4, 1973, under the auspices of His Eminence Cardinal Carberry. Fr. Neumann also paid fitting tribute to an outstanding member of our Society, Msgr. Lawrence J. Riley, who was recently appointed auxiliary bishop of Boston. Finally, the president expressed the group's heartfelt gratitude to Archbishop Furey for his personal interest in the

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San Antonio meeting; to Cardinal Wright, Very Rev. Stanley Matuszewski, M.S., and Very Rev. Ladislaus F. Pelczynski, M.I.C. for their financial assistance; and to the various speakers and discussion leaders for their valuable contributions. The meeting adjourned with a prayer at three o'clock in the afternoon.

REV. J. B. CAROL, O.F.M.
Secretary