His Eminence Edwin Cardinal O’Brien

Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*

St. Mary’s Seminary & University

Commencement Exercises

May 12, 2016

Cardinal O’Brien’s Remarks:

Thank you for that most generous introduction, Father Hurst. I think you can appreciate my saying that this is a kind of homecoming for me. Since my earliest days as Archbishop of Baltimore I took a deep interest in St. Mary’s Seminary & University – as does your present Archbishop William Lori. From the start I was impressed by the Sulpician spirit of this institution – a highly motivated student body, a distinguished and committed faculty and staff, and quite especially, a most effective and generous Board of Trustees. I had been directly involved in seminary administration for almost 20 years and never have I had the privilege and satisfaction of working with a Board as deeply interested and informed in every aspect of seminary formation all the while respectful toward and complementary to the responsibility of the rector and the formation guidelines of the Church. It has made for a strong, up to date and efficient St. Mary’s seminary & University. Since leaving Baltimore some 4 years ago, I have gained the exalted title of grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. For hundreds of years the Holy Father claimed that title, but in the Middle East turmoil of 1948, he decreed that a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church would assume that title, ever responsible to the Pope for the support of the Latin Church in the Holy Land.

Today our Order numbers close to 30,000 Knights and Dames, comprising 64 lieutenancies and delegations in 35 countries. The Order is completely a-political. Our primary task is for each member to grow in personal holiness. Our great responsibility is to help the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to maintain 60 parishes and 43 schools with 19,000 students. 58% Christian, 42% Muslim. I have always come away from the Holy Land deeply impressed by the harmony among Christians and Muslims there as well as by the collaboration among all Christina Faith Communities in fostering interfaith understanding and in providing for the needs of an oppressed Arable majority there. Progress, great progress is possible when we share one common belief in the dignity of every human being made in the image and likeness of God. Such was the motivating factor in the recent interfaith pilgrimage of Baltimore religions to Rome led by Archbishop Lori to receive Pope Francis’ prayer and blessing for peace in this great city. And how can we calculate this University’s ongoing contribution to interdenominational understanding and civic harmony~ How often during my tenure here would I meet a pastor of a small Christian community would boast of his or her love for ST. Mary’s, with a diploma or certificate from our Ecumenical Institute supporting their spread of the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

I warmly congratulate this evening's graduates and honorees and their families. I humbly accept this academic honor out of my regard this Nation’s’ first Seminary. I thank Archbishop Lori, Fr. Hurst and the full Board of Trustees for this gesture, and finally , I hope that this event will bring a prayer and an interfaith awareness of the needs of those who remain in the land where Jesus would still claim as his earlthy home.

And may I close with a personal and prayerful challenge from the 11th century. St. Anslem, a daily suggestion for all believers:

Break off from your cares and troubles and be less concerned about your tasks and labors. Enter into your mind's inner chambers. Shut out everything but God and whatever helps you to seek him. And, when you have shut the door, look for him. Speak new to God and say with your whole heart: I seek your face; your face, Lord, I desire.

Amen!