



Conference of Major Superiors of Men

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Media Release

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Cardinal Turkson Addresses Catholic Men's Religious Leaders; Benedictine Abbot Installed as Conference President

ORLANDO, FLORIDA (August 8, 2011). At their assembly in Orlando, FL, August 3-6, 2011, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men ([CMSM](#)), whose leaders represent more than 19,000 Catholic religious brothers and priests in the United States, participants heard a keynote address delivered by Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, President of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Cardinal Turkson explored the Assembly's theme, *I Have Given You an Example*, with the participants by drawing from the insights of Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in veritate*. He suggested that the Holy Father seems to be recommending five profound competencies, five foci for guiding the ministry of discipleship as Religious seeking to follow Christ's example in the world today: "1. to face the difficulties of the present time; 2. to ground the work in fundamental values, a new vision of the future; 3. with confidence, to take up the new responsibilities which go with a new vocation and mission; 4. to be open to profound cultural renewal and show confidence and hope; and 5. to commit to new rules, new forms of engagement."

Commenting on the need for confidence and hope in their ministries, Cardinal Turkson reminded the religious leaders present that "the poor do benefit from champions in solidarity who believe that injustice can be reduced, that harmonious relationships can be fostered, that our planetary ecology can be made sustainable, that a world of greater communion is possible; and Religious Congregations have been prominent among these champions." In speaking about the new forms of engagement, the Cardinal added that "this means that groups, organizations, institutions and movements of different *charisms* and traditions – whether Catholic, Christian, inter-religious or non-confessional – need to respect one another's identities and differences, and not see one another as rivals. We must cooperate, coordinate, and make our efforts converge towards the very same goals: greater service, greater love, greater justice, and greater peace!"

The Rev. Thomas Massaro, SJ, Professor of Moral Theology and Director of the S.T.L. program at the Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, was one of the plenary speakers at the assembly. In his talk entitled "Leadership for Social Justice in a Changing Church and World," he seemed to echo the Cardinal's words when he told the assembled participants that "true conversion for social justice springs from personal experience and exposure to social problems and engagement in efforts to solve them. You cannot succeed without some ideas and intellectual commitments, but principles only get you so far. At the risk of lapsing into clichés, it is a matter of hearts and hands, not just heads."

Sister Barbara Reid, OP, Vice President and Academic Dean at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, as well as Professor of New Testament Studies, was also a presenter at the assembly. Sister Reid's plenary address was entitled, "*Exemplary Leadership: Johannine Reflections on a Life Appointed for Others,*" in which she explored the assembly's theme in the larger context of St. John's Gospel. She described the symbolic washing of the feet of the disciples in the Johannine text as "a model of service among friends" and that "all disciples are the most beloved and all are friends of equal status." She added that "in order to arrive at equality in the community of disciples, there must be a two-pronged movement. Those who have been trapped in systems of servility and submission must embrace a theology of empowerment, while those who have power, privilege, and status must embrace a theology of relinquishment."

Abbot Matthew Leavy, OSB of St. Anselm's Abbey in Manchester, NH, provided spiritual reflections on the theme of the assembly, using the story of the washing of the feet in John's Gospel, chapter 13, verses 1-17.

In his Presidential Address, the Very Rev. Thomas Cassidy, SCJ, Provincial of the U.S. Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart and President of CMSM reminded the religious leaders present that "the best kept secret of the church is its social teachings" and challenged them to "imagine what a force for change it would be if all the people in the pews really understood and bought into the rich tradition of the church's social teachings."

At the conclusion of the assembly, the Right Rev. Giles P. Hayes, OSB, Abbot of St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown, NJ, was installed as the new President of the Conference. Abbot Giles becomes only the second monastic member to serve as President since the Conference was established in 1956 when Abbot Lawrence Vohs, OSB, was chosen as the first president. Abbot Giles did graduate work in American Church History, counseling and Sacred Scripture at Catholic University of America, Seton Hall University and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1987 Georgetown University awarded him a Doctorate in Humane Letters, *honoris causa*. He served as headmaster of Delbarton School in New Jersey for two five-year terms and he has been Abbot of St. Mary's Abbey since 2006. Annually he spends time working among the poor in the mountains of eastern Kentucky. He has written four scholarly articles and one book about American Church History.