

An Urgent Task of Dialogue

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Dr. Machado, HSP Board Members, fellow professors, dear friends in Christ:

On behalf of Fr. Robert Barron, the Rector & President of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake and in my own name, allow me to welcome you to Mundelein Seminary. This is the third time that Mundelein has been honored to host the Hispanic Summer Program. We are particularly glad to host you this year which is fraught with significance for the Hispanic community.

This is the 25th anniversary of the Hispanic Summer Institute. As an enterprise of theological education, HSP has been faithful at offering graduate studies for seminarians which supplement and enhance the education they are receiving at their own schools. HSP has accompanied the seminaries through a period when we have seen the Hispanic community in the United States grow dramatically and in the process begin to shape a different future for Christianity in the country. In two of his books, Dr. Philip Jenkins opened the minds of many American scholars to the fact that while, in Europe and English-speaking North America, Christianity appears to be in retreat, it is experiencing explosive growth in what has come to be called the Global South. Jenkins shocked reader with his bold declaration that the average Anglican is a black woman in Sub-Saharan Africa and the average Catholic a 26 year old Brazilian woman. Proving

the law of averages, the Archbishop of York is now a Ugandan and the Bishop of Rome an Argentine. Right now it is not the fundamental theology of the German academy which provides the hermeneutical key to papal teaching, it is the pastoral theology of Aparecida.

The study of theology in an Hispanic context, then, is an urgent task. It is urgent that the Christian life of the Global South be explained and explored through theological reflection. It is equally urgent that Hispanic theology more and more engage in dialogue with other particular theologies in the churches.

There are new challenges ahead. You who are students will minister and teach in a situation far different from even the one we see today. Your generation will have to face not the movements of people, but the mixing of peoples which will either threaten or enrich particularity. I believe that the way forward is a notion which has developed in ecumenical theology, the mutual exchange of gifts. Each particular theology must enter the dialogue prepared to receive gifts from the other theologies in the global church.

May your time with us, prepare you for such an exchange of gifts.