

Tribute to Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli

The Saint Thomas More Award and Bishop Saltarelli

On this day dedicated to the most Holy Trinity, we gather for the annual St. Thomas More dinner, to honor a saint so deserving of honor, because of his honesty and sense of what is right.

Let me tell you something which had not been told publicly before: Archbishop, now Cardinal McCarrick, — he was archbishop of Newark at the time — and I knew that Bishop Saltarelli was to be promoted from the office of Auxiliary Bishop of Newark to be Bishop of Wilmington. The Nuncio told us that we must agree on a date. And so, during the Bishops' Meeting in Washington — they have since saved heaps of money for our Conference, as well as honoring its history — by moving the annual meeting to Baltimore, we met for supper with Bishop Saltarelli to fix a date.

We soon enough agreed upon a date for the event, January 23, 1996, and then set about enjoying our meal.

One of the tasks that bishops take very seriously is making present in the diocese the teaching of the current pope. In Pope John Paul II we were blessed with someone who had come to the U. S. so often, in 1979, just a year after his election, in 1987, and again in 1995; in addition, he stopped twice in Alaska, where his plane refueled. On those occasions, the President of the United States flew up to greet him. And *Time Magazine*, in its listing of the 100 most important people in the world, did not include the present Pope, the Holy Father to so many people around the world.

The President of the United States did greet Pope Benedict on his arrival at Andrews Airport. And he welcomed him again to the United States, at a reception at the White House. How many here were present for that event? A person on the President's staff told me that they had more requests for that event than for any other during his time at the White House. And how many traveled to Washington the next day for the Mass at the Nationals' Stadium?

The visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States was a triumph from beginning to end. It is still a recent event, burned into our memories. Tonight, I would like to underline some aspects of the visit which, I think, are worth our attention because of what they tell us about the Church.

Pope Benedict, as Cardinal Ratzinger, is someone I have known for more than 23 years. As Vice-President and then as President of the national Bishops' Conference, I met with him in Rome over a period of six years three or four times a year. He was extremely helpful to us in the use of inclusive language in the translation of biblical texts. He understood the issue, which had never been discussed previously at a meeting of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.

English is the only modern language in which the difficulty is experienced. All the other tongues use "man" (in French l'homme, in Italian uomo, in Spanish hombre, in German Mann) in an inclusive sense. I had the privilege of explaining, at the invitation of Cardinal Ratzinger, this to a meeting of the Congregation. Because all did not speak English as their first language, I am not sure that everyone understood the nuances of my presentation.

But, from that time, I described the Cardinal as a person who reminded me of my mother, a school teacher, "sweet and clear." As Americans have come to know him through the papal visit, I am sure that they have seen some of the sweetness we experienced and the clarity of his teaching. The fact that he is drawing crowds about twice the size of those who came to hear Pope John Paul II is something the media have not focused on.

When Pope Benedict came to the United States, after his meeting with the President, he addressed the bishops assembled in the basement of the National Shrine in Washington. There he pointed out what brought him to the United States at this time: the bicentenary of the establishment of Baltimore as an archdiocese, and of the Di