

Annual Bishop Lucker Lecture held March 2 in Hutchinson

evening presenter, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. addresses 'Becoming a Community of Disciples'

Editor's note: Following are excerpts of Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J. talk on Becoming a Community of Disciples which was presented at the annual diocesan sponsored Bishop Lucker Lecture held March 2 at the Hutchinson Event Center, Hutchinson, MN. The complete text of his talk is posted on the New Ulm Diocesan web site: www.dnu.org; or can be obtained by contacting the New Ulm Diocesan Office of Communications, 1400 6th Street North, New Ulm, MN 56073; (507) 359-2966.

When one of the pre-eminent Catholic theologians in the world, Cardinal Avery Dulles, S.J., accepted an invitation from Bishop John C. Nienstedt to be this year's presenter at the annual Bishop Lucker Lecture on March 2, he made his travel plans as he has hundreds of times before expecting every detail to unfold smoothly. Little did he know that he would wait at New York's La Guardia Airport for three hours and then sit in the plane on the runway for another three hours before taking off for Minneapolis with an arrival time of 7:30 p.m. for the 7:00 p.m. lecture in Hutchinson. The Cardinal was a victim of the unpredictable March weather to which Minnesotans are accustomed. The problem was an ice storm in New York City that delayed incoming and outgoing flights. As the evening's audience was arriving at the Hutchinson Event Center – some in great anticipation arriving as early as 5:30 p.m. – Cardinal Dulles was literally "up in the air."

Thanks to the marvels of modern technology, the Cardinal was able to deliver his lecture from the airport terminal in Minneapolis via a telephone connection to the Event Center which was then broadcast over the sound system. Following are some excerpts of his lecture.

On his acceptance of the invitation to the Bishop Lucker Lecture:

"It is an honor to be invited by His Excellency, Bishop Nienstedt, to deliver a lecture dedicated to the memory of the late Bishop Raymond Lucker, whom I remember as a friend and an associate in the Catholic Theological Society of America. The topic on which I have been asked to speak, "Becoming a Community of Disciples," would surely have appealed to Bishop Lucker, who both exemplified discipleship in his own person and encouraged it in others."

On the meaning of discipleship:

"The term 'discipleship' aptly describes the process of becoming a mature Christian. The disciple is in the first place a believer, one who accepts Jesus as a teacher, prophet, or Messiah. As a teacher Jesus gives his disciples new standards of conduct, which they are obliged to follow. He calls them to a radically new way of life, in which many worldly values are turned upside down. The disciples must be ready to forgive injuries, to renounce wealth and power, and to accept hatred and persecution out of fidelity to the Gospel."

On the key element of discipleship:

"As should be clear by now, discipleship consists to a great extent in receptivity. The disciple must ingest the ideas and attitudes of the Master. But the disciples must also be active. Jesus intends

his disciples to be collaborators in his mission."

On the functioning of the community of disciples:

"The early chapters of Acts give us an account of the functioning of the community of disciples in

Jerusalem and its environs during the first few years of Church history. The multitude of the disciples grows by thousands. Meanwhile the Church is receiving a structure



"All members of the faithful are called to bear witness to Christ and to engage in the apostolate. . . . They are called in a special way to make the

Church present and operative in the family, the neighborhood, the market place, and the public square, especially in environments where it is difficult or impossible for the clergy and religious to penetrate."

capable of transmitting the gospel faithfully to distant lands and future generations. It is beginning to acquire Scriptures of its own, along with sacramental rites and a hierarchical form of government. The apostles and the bishop-presbyters whom they choose as associates function as pillars supporting the new community."

On sacraments and discipleship:

The sacraments are crucial moments in our encounter with Christ. Each of them builds up the Church as the community of disciples."

On discipleship and the Eucharist:

"A great deal could be said of the Eucharist, the supreme sacrament to which all the others are ordered. . . . All in all, participation in the Eucharist is perhaps the most complete act of discipleship that is

possible here on earth. Celebrated in union with the saints and angels in glory, it is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that will be celebrated in the new Jerusalem."

On the mission of the faithful:

"All members of the faithful are called to bear witness to Christ and to engage in the apostolate. In so doing they are not mere delegates of the hierarchy, participating in its mission. The Lord gives lay members of the People of God a

mission of their own through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and matrimony. They are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in the family, the neighborhood, the

market place, and the public square, especially in environments where it is difficult or impossible for the clergy and religious to penetrate."

On lay ministry for the upbuilding of the Church:

"In recent years it has become increasingly clear that the laity are often called not only to work in secular surroundings but also to engage in ministries for the upbuilding of the Church herself. More than 30,000 lay persons in this nation alone work at least twenty hours a week in paid positions in parishes, and thousands of others work as volunteers. . . . There is no good reason why activities such as these should be reserved to the ordained

or should not be called ministries when performed by lay persons."

On ministry and discipleship:

"There can be no authentic Christian ministry, whether official or unofficial, unless it is also discipleship. . . . The term ministry, like discipleship, is a very inclusive one, not limited to either clergy or laity. It helps us to understand that all Christians, ordained or unordained, are under one Master, Jesus Christ, and are engaged in a common enterprise: to spread the gospel, to build up the Church, and thereby save and sanctify the world. While fully recognizing this commonality, we must also keep in mind that there is a great diversity of callings in the Church. The community of disciples is a structured one with many vocations and offices. For the sake of discipleship itself, it is important to have office-holders who can speak and act in the name of Christ the head."

On the limitation and strength of the 'Community of Disciples' model:

"As I have been saying for many years, no one image or model of the Church is capable of exhausting the mystery, and we should not expect it to do so. . . . The idea of the Church as community of disciples, then, deserves an honored place among the models. It corrects some of the shortcomings of other models, but needs to be corrected by them in turn. As a great mystery imbued with the hidden presence of God, the Church is always open to further investigation."

FOR THE COMPLETE TEXT OF CARDINAL DULLES'
PRESENTATION ON *BECOMING A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES*

VISIT: www.dnu.org