

**Bishop Thomas Tobin's address**  
**Sept. 29, 2002/Walsh University**  
**Lutheran/Catholic Covenant Celebration**

First of all, to the members of the Covenant Commission, and members of the staff both of the Catholic Diocese and Lutheran Synod, thank you so very very much for your good work, your hard work preparing for this very happy and special occasion we come together for this afternoon. An event like this, of course, doesn't just happen; for almost a year now, I suppose, people were working very hard to prepare for our gathering today, so both Bishop Miller and I know and are very very grateful. And a word of thanks again to Walsh University President Jusseaume, thank you again, for your wonderful hospitality. Very grateful to have the opportunity of using your beautiful facility. Thank you very much. And thanks to all who are present today. You know, you begin a program like this, you have no idea exactly how many people will sign up or how many will show up. We are grateful that you are here today, and I think it will be well worth your time.



It does strike me that this is a weekend of historic momentous meaning. Different places and different ways for those of you who are golf fans, like to play golf or watch golf on television, as you know this is the weekend of the Ryder Cup, the match between the Americans and the Europeans that's been taking place in Ireland this weekend. I think I saw it on the news that the Europeans won; I don't know if that is accurate or not, but none the less, always a very historic and hard fought contest. And as we gather here, as you know, I am told there are some people meeting in Pittsburgh to watch a football game. Two teams that have a long history together. It is their hundredth meeting, Steelers and the Browns. Now just so that I have some, you know... Catholics are always into relics, little momentums... I have my Pittsburgh Steeler watch on today. I can be connected at least a little bit to what is going on there. Another momentous meeting. Someone out there said, as we were registering, a young lady said, "I might become a Lutheran; I'll never be a Cleveland fan." At least we

have our priorities right. And of course, we come here, Lutherans and Catholics together to talk about prayer, and study in action. And of all the groups I have mentioned, golf, football and religion, I think we have the best chance of getting along well together today. I am pretty sure about that.

It is important to note that the dialogue between churches, between religions, hasn't always been quite so friendly as it is today. Some of you know I have been doing a little bit of reading and a little bit of writing about Father Demetrius Gallitzin, sometimes know as Prince Gallitzin. Prince Gallitzin was a Russian prince who converted to Catholicism from the Orthodox Church with the influence of his very pious mother. He came to the United States, was ordained a priest, the first priest who received his full priestly training in the Catholic Church in the United States to be ordained here. He set out then for his mission work in the Allegheny Mountains of Western Pennsylvania, really an historic figure in the first half of the 19th century. Between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, it was Father Gallitzin who established the church in that part of our country. He was a pretty historic figure for American Catholicism. But reading a little bit about Father Gallitzin, I did come across a couple passages that I thought were also very relevant for our gathering today.

This describes, just to read a couple of passages, Father Gallitzin ecumenical dialogue with -- may I just identify this book as a Protestant minister named Johnson -- and it says this: "A controversy between Father Gallitzin and Protestant Minister Johnson began in the early part of 1815 when the United States was still recovering from the war of 1812. At the darkest moment of the conflict, President Madison issued a proclamation asking for the recitation of public prayers to plead that Washington's capture be averted or, if unavoidable, that the harm rising from it be mitigated. The occasion of that prayer was used by the Protestant Minister in Huntington, Pennsylvania, named Johnson to deliver a vicious sermon against Catholics. Following his usual example of anti-Catholic propaganda, Johnson's sermon proclaimed that the true enemies of America were Catholics, made evil by their superstitious habits, blind obedience to Rome, and heathen customs. Johnson assured his audience that Catholics could never make suitable citizens, and were responsible for everything that was wrong, or could go wrong in the United States." Though some are still saying that is true today! But that was Reverend Johnson's approach to ecumenical dialogue.

Not to be outdone, then, sometime after that Demetrius Gallitzin wrote a long tome called the "Defense of Catholic Principles." And this is what he responded to Reverend Johnson. He said: "For God's sake, dear sir, if you value the glory of God, and the salvation of your soul, give up

protesting against the Catholic Church. In it alone you will find salvation. As sure as God lives, it is the true church of Christ. May the day of judgment be for me the day of God's total vengeance, if the holy Roman Catholic Church is not the only one true immaculate spouse of Christ." Father Gallitzin continues, "Hush into silence your prejudices. Listen and adore. Humble yourself from St. Paul into the very dust. Pray for light. You shall see it brighter than the dazzling rays of the midday sun."

The rhetoric of those days was a little bit more direct than some of the rhetoric we use today. However, to add a positive note to this dialogue, to include a positive note, even in those days there was some degree of civility among Catholics and Protestants. And this is what, finally, Father Gallitzin wrote, sometime later. He said: "Dear friends, whatever differences on points of doctrine may exist among the different denominations of Christians, all should be united in the bonds of charity. All should pray for one another. All should be willing to assist one another. And where we are compelled to disapprove of our neighbors' doctrine, that our disaffirmation fall upon his doctrine only, not upon his person. Thus, the sacred cause of religion will be effectually promoted, and thus the commonwealth will be safe. United we stand, but divided we fall."

So even in those days that were intense in rhetoric, it was possible to reach Christian civility and discussion among different denominations and religions. So we have come a long way. And I guess it is safe to say that in truth, we have begun a pilgrimage together. The reference that Sister Brendan used in the beginning of the presentation today quoted the words of Bishop Miller, two years ago, when he spoke about his journey we are undertaking together. It is a pilgrimage.

And a pilgrimage of course, is a special kind of a journey. It is not a business trip, it is not a vacation, it is not a pleasure trip. A pilgrimage is a journey with a sacred purpose. A pilgrimage in search of the divine. And that is the kind of journey we are on together, Lutherans and Catholics together. A sacred journey in search of the divine. It seems to me that this pilgrimage, as every pilgrimage, has three characteristics: it has to be characterized by purpose, by patience, and by prayer.

First of all in our journey together, and our pilgrimage, we need to have a purpose. And our goal, and our pilgrimage, very simply put, is to increase the unity in the church of Christ. When all is said and done, it comes down to that bottom line. To increase the unity in the church of Christ. Something that has been a challenge from the very beginning. We do so with the hope that we will work together more effectively. We do so that we can give more effective witness to the world, with our identity as

followers of Christ. Identity is important. Who are we? Who can we say we are and who does the world say we are?

Identity can also be real tricky business. We have run into this once in a while. Yesterday morning I spent some time in prayer with the members of Catholic Charismatic Renewal in Youngstown. We came together for a day of prayer and reflection and renewal and I was present for a Morning Prayer and discussion prayer in the morning. And I walked into the Ursuline Center where the program was being held and a very nice lady came up to me before I could get organized and she said, "Excuse me. Do you think when Bishop Tobin gets here, would he mind signing some of his books?" And I said, "well I think I could speak for Bishop Tobin, he would be happy to." Then later on, she realized her mistake; she was very embarrassed. But those things happen sometimes.

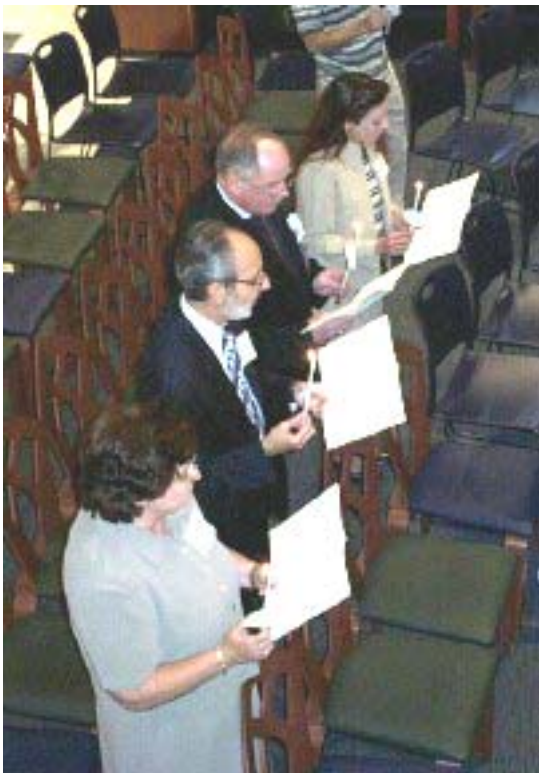
Last year, I was running errands around the city of Youngstown and doing some shopping, going to the bank, getting some gas, and those things we need to do once in a while, and I was dressed very casually. I walked into the Sparkle Market on Gypsy Lane in Youngstown and a gentleman came up to me – I was pushing my little cart – and he stopped and he said, "You know, you look a lot like Bishop Tobin." I said, "Do I really? I don't know," I said. "I think Bishop Tobin is younger and better looking!" And he said "Well, that is true." So I lost either way.

Identity. Our identity is as disciples of Jesus Christ. The question is, does the world recognize us together as disciples of Christ. One way that we do that is by increasing our unity – Jesus prayed that his disciples would be one, so the world would recognize that he had sent them. Our journey has to have a purpose. Secondly our journey needs patience. We need patience whenever we travel especially these days. Things can go wrong. Things happen, whenever we travel, especially these days. Last year– two years ago now, almost -- when we had our diocesan pilgrimage to Rome for the Jubilee Year, we arrived in Rome safely. But for a number of us, our luggage was in Germany. It worked out, but you probably have been through that experience; you have waited at the luggage rack and nothing comes out, and then you feel sort of abandoned. We were in Rome but our suitcase was in Germany.

This past summer traveling on vacation, passing through the Pittsburgh airport, I was one of the lucky individuals who was pulled aside for an extra security check. You go through the metal detector, and then you have to show your driver's license several times. I was one of the lucky guys that had to go over by the gate, you know where they had a table where you have to spread everything out. The gentleman was very nice, in fact he was

trying to be funny, and they went through everything. Including my wallet. He said well, it looks like you have already been robbed. He made me take off my shoes, and he said “I apologize for doing this sir, but after all it would be good for my sinuses.” Now this is a man protecting our nation against terrorists.

Traveling can be difficult. It can be very challenging. Any journey needs a healthy dose of patience, because bad things can happen. Certainly, I don't know about you but in my own personal spiritual journey, my own personal spiritual life, bad things happen. We have setbacks, things happen that I shouldn't allow to happen. Our journey to perfection and sanctity is derailed. Sometimes in our journey together as Lutherans and Catholics, that might meet obstacles, too. We might have setbacks, we might have disagreements, we might have some problems. But that is part of journeying together. That is why in our journey, we need wisdom, and time and courage and patience.



And finally, in our journey together, dear friends, we need prayer. We need prayer. From a human perspective, of course, we need to do our very best to promote unity, and we do that in our study and our action and our prayer together. But this unity we search for is ultimately the work of God's Holy Spirit. So while we study, while we act together, we also pray together. We do so with hope and with confidence. As I conclude, let me just share with you this final little prayer, praying that the Holy Spirit will come upon us today and upon our churches, upon all the work we strive to do together. This is a brief reflection from Pope Paul VI, in the

wake of the Second Vatican council. He says, “What does the church need? The church needs the spirit, the Holy Spirit. He it is who animates and sanctifies the church. He is the principle source of her unity, the inner source of her light and strength. He is her support and consoler, her source of charism and songs, her peace and her joy, her pledge and prelude to blessed and eternal life.”

Thank you. God Bless You.