

A wide-angle photograph of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. The building's massive dome and ornate facade are the central focus. In the foreground, a large, open-air altar structure with a red curtain and a crucifix is set up. A large crowd of people, many in white, is gathered in front of the altar. The sky is overcast.

FROM NUGENT HALL

by President John Garvey

A MOMENT IN HISTORY

The Holy Father Comes to Campus

“**F**ratres carissimi,” *dear brothers*, Pope Francis addressed the crowd of 30,000 gathered on our campus, “let us lift up our prayers to God the Father Almighty through Jesus Christ.” This was the beginning of the canonization rite for St. Junípero Serra at the Mass Pope Francis celebrated from the East Portico of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on September 23. We began to recite the long litany of saints, invoking their names and asking for their prayers.

It was a moment that stood out to me in all the excitement of the day. The names sounded strange in their Latinized form. John Paul II became Joannes Paule Secunde. Mother Teresa was Beata Teresia Calcuttensis. But many of the names were also familiar: Katharine Drexel and John Neumann, Frances Xavier Cabrini and Elizabeth Ann Seton, Isaac Jogues, Peter Claver, and Kateri Tekakwitha. These are American saints. They built hospitals and schools here. They defended the dignity

of immigrants, American Indians, and African Americans. They brought the Gospel to the new world. There was a sense of reverence as we invoked their names, but also a sense of pride and excitement. They are our saints. Their example shows that the Church in the United States has a distinctively Catholic contribution to make to our country and a distinctively American contribution to make to the Church.

The American bishops believed this when they founded The Catholic University of America. They wanted to build a university that was faithfully Catholic and thoroughly American, a university that would serve the Church and the nation. This mission animates the work we do every day at Catholic University, both in and out of the classroom. But there are occasions that manifest our identity and mission in a striking way. September 23 was one of those occasions.

The CUA Chamber Choir and the University Symphony Orchestra provided

beautiful music for the Mass. Students from our School of Architecture and Planning designed the magnificent altar furnishings. Among the 1,251 priests, bishops, and cardinals who concelebrated the Mass were many Catholic University alumni. More than 400 Catholic University students worked as volunteers to ensure that the day was a success. And all over campus I saw Catholic University students, staff, faculty, and alumni, all thrilled to welcome the Holy Father to the United States and our campus. The Catholic University of America was not just the backdrop for the canonization Mass of Junípero Serra. Our community was a part of this moment in the history of the Church in the United States.

In his homily for the Mass Pope Francis called the saints in that long litany a “chain of witnesses who have made it possible for the good news of the Gospel to be, in every generation, both ‘good’ and ‘news.’” It’s a chain of witnesses we seek to join.