

*Laudatio* for Rev. James F. Kunes, s.m.

by Prof. Michael Sherwin, o.p.

University of Fribourg, 28 Nov. 2014

En considération de la présence virtuelle de notre honoré et d'autres américains, si vous me permettez, je donnerai cette *laudatio* en notre langue maternelle commune.

Reverend James F. Kunes, of the Society of Mary, a Marianist. I have been asked, as one of the professors in Moral Theology here at your Alma mater and as a fellow American, to present to you in the name of the faculty of theology, a Golden Doctorate, in honor of the work you did here 50 years ago.

The doctorate was a study of the spiritual theology of Fr. Chaminade, founder of the Marianists (a community that has over a hundred year presence here in Fribourg), and is entitled: "The Spirit of Faith in the Active Life: a Spirituality of Faith, Based on the Writings of William Joseph Chaminade."

To understand the importance of this study, we need to remember that in the early 1960's there were still very few Manuals of moral theology that gave much attention to the virtue of faith, let alone to a spirituality of faith. Fr. Kunes' study, therefore, was firmly within the movement of theological renewal emerging at that time. The years during which our honoree was pursuing his theological studies (and he did his STB, his STL and his STD here at Fribourg) were years of great change: of excitement and hope, but also of danger and uncertainty. Those years saw the death of Pius XII, the election of John XXIII, the calling of the Council, then also the death of good Pope John, the building of the Berlin Wall, the Cuban Missile crisis, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the ongoing domestic and international unrest that marked that time. In short, a period not too different from that during which Fr. Chaminade was writing, as he and the Church tried to come to terms with the effects of the French Revolution.

Fr. Chaminade's response to the troubled times in which he lived, was to animate the laity as well as religious and priests to return to the roots of the Gospel: to live lives of service animated by the love of Christ and the example of Mary. As Fr. Kunes' study underlines, this spirituality was a spirituality of sapiential faith, that unites us to Christ in loving trust (that both enlightens the mind and warms the heart), a loving truth that has Mary as its model and guide. Our honoree is not alone in recognizing the importance of Fr. Chaminade's spiritual vision. John Paul II saw it as well, beatifying him in the year 2000 in the same ceremony at which John XXIII was beatified, announcing in his homily that Fr. Chaminade's beatification "reminds the faithful that it is their task to find ever new ways of bearing witness to the faith, especially in order to reach those who are far from the Church and who do not have the usual means of knowing Christ." "New Methods from New times" and all for the love of Christ; this was what animated Bl. William Chaminade, and this is what we celebrate in honoring Rev. James F. Kunes with a Golden Doctorate. Thank you for your fidelity, thank you for your work, and congratulations.