



Office of the President

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3100 • FAX 202-541-3166

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President

July 7, 2011

Prof. John E. Thiel
President, Catholic Theological Society of America
Department of Religious Studies
Fairfield University
1073 North Benson Road
Fairfield, CT 06824

Dear Professor Thiel,

Thank you for your letter of 12 June 2011 regarding the resolution passed by the Catholic Theological Society of America regarding the procedures followed by the Committee on Doctrine leading up to its public statement about the book *Quest for the Living God*.

I was especially pleased to read your affirmation of the apostolic authority of the Magisterium. It is important to recognize the central role that bishops exercise in theological development and, most particularly, for the pastoral good of all of the faithful in assuring that books used in Catholic universities are consistent with the authentic teaching of the church. The statement to which you refer was approved and issued mindful of such high responsibilities.

It is also helpful to read of the desire of your society that proper procedures be followed in these important matters, and for that concern I am very grateful. Thus, I sought counsel about your correspondence. This leads me to conclude that the assertion that the Committee on Doctrine ignored *Doctrinal Responsibilities* is somewhat inaccurate. This document does not actually address the particular role of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine and its specific obligations. As you probably know, this document guides rather the work of individual diocesan bishops and does not presume to offer guidance to the Bishops' Committee on Doctrine. That having been said, we bishops should always be mindful of improving the manner in which we engage theologians in a necessary discussion of their work.

I should also point out, that according to USCCB rules, any proposed statement by a committee must be approved by a vote of the Administrative Committee. As President of this Episcopal Conference I serve as chairman of that committee. At its March meeting, the Administrative Committee discussed both the content of and the procedure leading up to the statement by the Committee on Doctrine. In view

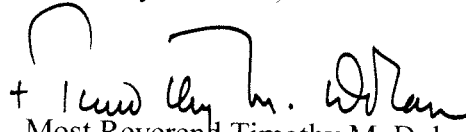
of the pastoral concerns presented by the Committee on Doctrine, and following their proposal, the Administrative Committee unanimously authorized the immediate publication of the statement.

As the next step in this process, the Committee has invited and received a considered response from Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, which is now being reviewed.

I thank you again for your helpful observations that we bishops always need to be sensitive about the methods we use in our cherished collaboration with theologians. We would likewise find it of much assistance if the CTSA would also collaborate with us in a respectful critique of any theologian's work when areas leading to confusion are noted. It would be our hope that the CTSA would be as attentive to the *content* of troubling theological texts as it admirably is to the *ways* we bishops bring concerns to the attention of any theologian

With renewed gratitude for your communication, and with assurances of my prayerful best wishes,
I am

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy M. Dolan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan

Archbishop of New York

President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops