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CNS documentary service

Catholics Should Combat 'Ugly Tide of Anti-Islamic Bigotry'

Bishop McElroy

San Diego Bishop Robert W. McElroy is challenging U.S. Catholics to take an active role in combating "the scourge of anti-Islamic prejudice." In a Feb. 17 keynote address at the University of San Diego's Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice, the bishop said, "We are witnessing in the United States a new nativism which the American Catholic community must reject and label for the religious bigotry which it is." The evening event took place against the backdrop of a planning meeting for the first national Catholic-Muslim dialogue, which was held Feb. 17-18

"In both our doctrine and our history Catholics can find a resonance with the experience of the Muslim community in the present day."

at the Catholic university. After 20 years of regional dialogues with representatives of the U.S. Muslim community, the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops established a national Catholic-Muslim dialogue. In his remarks, Bishop McElroy exhorted Catholics to actively seek relationships with Muslims on a personal level, to accompany the Muslim community as it wrestles with religious liberty issues and to join with them "to witness to and fight for" a Middle East where Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities can coexist peacefully. Bishop McElroy said U.S. Catholics should view with repugnance the "repeated falsehoods" that Islam is inherently violent, that Muslims seek to supplant the U.S. Constitution with Shariah and that Muslim immigration threatens "the cultural identity of the American people." Such claims, he said, are strikingly reminiscent of the anti-Catholic bigotry that was once prevalent in the United States. Bishop McElroy's keynote follows.

this morning representatives of the Muslim communities of the United States and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops initiated a new level of structured national theological dialogue. This dialogue seeks to discern the common themes of faith and truth which unite our two faith communities and to explore our theological differences in the spirit of mutual esteem which was the centerpiece of the mandate for dialogue con-

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