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## Introduction of Berakah Recipient

### Bruce T. Morrill

*Rev. Bruce T. Morrill, S.J., is associate professor and graduate program director in the Theology Department at Boston College.*

How I wish that I had a camcorder back in the early 1990s—today, of course, a tidy little digital camera or cell phone would do the trick—so as to be able to open this brief introduction of our honoree John Baldwin with a video of John graciously presiding over a graduate seminar at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley. The short clip would begin at a certain juncture in a discussion when, with just a touch of self-deprecating humor, John asks, "Have I given you my little lecture on blessings yet? I suppose this would be as good a time as any to do it." And he does, quickly warming to the topic with enthusiasm for, indeed, sheer delight in the practical theological tradition of Jewish *berakoth* and its parallel development in early Christian ritual. Such would be an unrehearsed self-portrait, testifying to how fitting is the honor we are privileged to confer on John tonight.

John is genuinely, thoroughly a liturgical theologian. He pursues knowledge of the God revealed in worship—he discovers Wisdom waiting to meet him—in his love for and service to God's people in a number of circles: public and private, ecclesial and inter-religious, academic and pastoral. A professor who lives with scholastics (Jesuit students), a mentor and spiritual director to laity and religious, a fine classroom instructor and seminar leader, and an especially good thesis and dissertation director—this list touches on the vital impact he has had upon the lives of so many students and younger scholars.

His own scholarship, of course, John has shared through a prodigious publishing career. In the early 1980s John's dissertation project on stational liturgies in early Christianity proved to be a highly original piece of historical research that liturgical scholars immediately embraced with enthusiasm. John published the work with the Pontifical Oriental Institute Press as his first book, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship*, in 1987. Two years later he made a portion of the research available in a smaller installment of the Alcuin/GROW

Studies in Worship series entitled *Liturgy in Ancient Jerusalem*. John has subsequently published two other books. In 1991 the Pastoral Press edited fifteen of his earlier essays for their *Worship* book series under the subtitle, *City, Church, and Renewal*. Most recently, in 2003, John contributed *Bread of Life, Cup of Salvation: Understanding the Mass* to Sheed and Ward's highly popular "Come and See" series. Extolling the book's timeliness, theological breadth, pastoral sensitivity, and accessible prose, our colleague Ed Foley endorsed the book with the assertion that John has "secure[d] his place as a trustworthy liturgical commentator." The scores of John's other articles, chapters, and book reviews likewise have exuded that impressive combination of qualities, making so many of us eager readers when his newest offering appears. Finally in the realm of publications, John has practiced his characteristic faithfulness to friendship and collegiality by editing two books, one collecting the "Amen Corner" essays of the late Robert Hovda, and the other honoring the now recently deceased Aidan Kavanagh.

Tireless and gracious leadership in the field of liturgical theology has characterized John's service as president and on the executive committees of our own Academy, as well as Societas Liturgica, the Catholic Academy of Liturgy, and the International Jungmann Society for Jesuits and Liturgy. Some of the broad range of his service, notably the recent history of ICEL (the Roman Catholic Church's International Commission on English in the Liturgy), has required John's witnessing painful outcomes and joining hurt colleagues in solidarity. Such harder moments, too, need acknowledgment on a happy occasion. For after all, our posture today is one of gratitude, and surely we must be thankful for a prophetic and loving voice who himself has paid personally at times for his commitments to ecumenism, justice in the church and society, honesty in the American and ecclesial academies.

The work and play of a life lived as worship John does with twinkling eyes, gentle humor, a truly rare degree of personal transparency, and a healthy dose of competitiveness on the tennis court. The latter exercise, John will tell you, balances his pleasure in good meals—shared food and drink that forge friendships. Tonight we gratefully honor John for his continued sharing with us such human actions that draw us into divine blessing, our grateful use of all created things to the glory of the One who has first loved us.



## The North American Academy of Liturgy

*The 2007 Berakah Award*  
to

*John Baldwin, S.J.*

*From East coast to West,  
from Rome to New Haven, Berkeley and Boston,  
you have kindled the light of liturgical theology.*

*Of urban Christian faith and Egeria,  
of liturgical presidency and ecumenical hope,  
your research, your pen, and your voice—  
a gracious but firm truth-telling—  
have illumined primary rites and lived symbols  
for students, colleagues, and ecclesia alike.*

*You have taught us cities  
—Jerusalem, Constantinople, Rome—  
while animating all our processions ad altare Dei  
pointing always toward the new Jerusalem.*

*For your life and work, Ad majorem Dei gloriam,  
this Academy gives thanks to God.*

