



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO MR JIMMY CARTER
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***

Monday, 21 June 1980

Mr President,

1. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you today. I am very happy to be able *to reciprocate the warm welcome* I received from you in Washington. The memories of my visit to the White House and of all my other contacts with the people of the United States are stored in my heart; they are recalled with joy and are frequently expressed in my prayers for America.

2. Your visit today to the Vatican as President of the United States is greatly appreciated. I am pleased to see in it an indication of *your country's profound respect and esteem for ethical and religious values* - a respect and esteem which are so characteristic of millions of Americans of different faiths.

During my visit last October, I was a personal witness to the way these spiritual values find expression in the lives of your people, how they form the moral fabric of your nation, how they constitute the strength of the civil State, which does not forget that it was founded on sound moral principles, and which wishes to preserve its heritage as "one nation under God".

3. All fields of human endeavour are enriched by true ethical values. During my pastoral journey I had occasion to speak of these values and to profess my own profound esteem for all who embrace them in national life. There is no sphere of activity that does not benefit when religious values are actively pursued. *The political, social and economic domains are authenticated and reinforced by the application of those moral standards* that must be irrevocably incorporated into the tradition of every State.

4. *The same principles* that guide the internal destinies of a people should *direct their relationships with other nations*. I desire to express my esteem for all those who, at the national and international level, have exemplified the values of compassion and justice, of personal concern for others and fraternal sharing, in an effort to promote ever greater freedom, ever more authentic equality, and an ever more stable peace for a world craving for truth, unity and love.

5. At the centre of all sublime spiritual values, is *the worth of every human person*, worthy of respect from the first moment of existence, endowed with dignity and rights, and called to share responsibility for every brother and sister in need.

6. In the cause of dignity and human rights, the Church is intent on offering to the world the contribution of the Gospel of Christ, proclaiming that man is created in the image and likeness of God and destined for life everlasting. Although, as the Second Vatican Council emphasizes, the Church is not a political entity, she still serves, together with the political community but by a separate title, *the personal and social vocation of the same human beings*[1]. And, while distinct from the socio-economic realm, the Church is called to serve it by proclaiming that man is "the source and center and purpose of all socio-economic life"[2].

In this area as in so many others, the Church is happy to speak out in favour of the human person and for everything that is advantageous to humanity. Moreover, she gives the assurance of her support for all that is done for the good of mankind, according to the distinctive contribution of each one. In this sense, Church and State are called to collaborate in the cause of man, and in the promotion of sacred human dignity. This collaboration is eminently useful, and it corresponds to the truth about man. Through the ethical formation of true citizens, who work side by side with their fellow citizens, the Church fulfils another aspect of her collaboration with the political community.

7. And today in this context, Mr President, I wish to assure you of my deep interest in every effort aimed at the betterment of humanity and devoted to world peace. In a particular way *the Middle East and the neighbouring regions occupy our common attention* because of the immense importance they hold for international well-being. I offer my prayers that all worthy endeavours at reconciliation and cooperation may be crowned with success.

The question of Jerusalem, which during these very days attracts the attention of the world in a special way, is pivotal to a just peace in those parts of the world, since this Holy City embodies interests and aspirations that are shared by different peoples in different ways. It is my hope that a common monotheistic tradition of faith will help to promote harmony among all those who call upon God. I would renew my earnest plea that just attention be given to the issues affecting Lebanon and to the whole Palestinian problem.

8. The Holy See is aware of a worldwide aspect of *the responsibility that falls to the United States*; it is likewise conscious of the risks involved in facing this responsibility. But despite all

inconveniences and problems, despite human limitations, governments of good will must continue to work for peace and for international understanding in the control and reduction of armaments, in the promotion of the North-South dialogue, and in furthering the advancement of developing nations.

Just recently, on my visit to Africa, I was able to perceive personally the importance of that continent and the contribution it is called to make to the good of the world. But all this in turn requires the interest, support and fraternal assistance of other peoples, so that *African stability, independence and rightful autonomy* will be safeguarded and reinforced.

9. The question of *human dignity is particularly linked with efforts on behalf of justice*. Any violation of justice anywhere is an affront to human dignity, and all effective contributions to justice are truly worthy of the greatest praise. The purification of structures in the political, social and economic fields cannot help but yield salutary results.

I know of the interest of the United States in the situation in Central America, especially at this time.

Persevering efforts are required and must be sustained until every brother and sister in that part of the world, and elsewhere, is secure in his or her dignity and *free from manipulation by any power*, overt or subtle, anywhere on earth. I hope that the United States will lend its powerful support to efforts which effectively uplift the human level of peoples in need.

10. As I mentioned, my contacts with the people of the United States are vivid in my memory.

Enthusiasm and generosity, the will not to fall into enslaving materialism in the pursuit of the common good at home and in the international field - and, for Christians, the need to communicate the justice and the peace of Christ - these *are the forces that the Holy See encourages* for the benefit of humanity.

Mr President, my words today are meant to be an expression of appreciation for what has been done, an echo of the persistent needs of the world, a challenge of hope and confidence to the American people, whom I have known and loved so much. May God sustain you and bless the nation which you represent.

*AAS 72 (1980), p.635-638.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. III, 1 pp. 1794-1798.

L'Osservatore Romano 22.6.1980 pp.1, 2.

L'incontro con la comunità americana in Roma

Dopo lo scambio dei doni il Santo Padre accompagna il Presidente Carter fino alla Sala Clementina dove si trovano in attesa i Cardinali Baum, Prefetto della Sacra Congregazione per l'Educazione Cattolica, Krol, Arcivescovo di Philadelphia, e Cooke, Arcivescovo di New York, con alcuni Vescovi americani gli alunni del Pontificio Collegio Americano del Nord e una rappresentanza della comunità statunitense residente in Roma ai quali il Presidente rivolge un saluto. Quindi prende la parola il Santo Padre che rivolge agli astanti il seguente discorso.

To the American community of Rome

Your Eminences,

Dear friends from the United States,

1. Your visit today takes me back in spirit to America. I have already met this morning with the President of your country, and now your presence evokes the different categories of people that I met last October. A number of these groups are represented in the American community in Rome.

My particular greetings go to Cardinal Krol and Cardinal Cooke and to the Bishops who have come specially for this occasion, and also to Cardinal Baum and Bishop Marcinkus, who assist me day after day in Rome, and to the large number of American seminarians.

Every gathering of Americans elicits some reference to your homeland and to the *bountiful gifts that God has bestowed on your people*: gifts of nature, as well as spiritual and religious blessings. A few years ago, on the occasion of your Bicentennial celebration - at which I was present in Philadelphia - you made a special effort to emphasize your heritage and to preserve the gifts you had received.

2. Every gift that comes from God creates a *responsibility* in the recipient. This is very true of America, where God's gifts have been abundant. One of the eminent gifts that constitute the special heritage of all your people - people of different backgrounds, ethnic origins and creeds - is the gift of freedom: a gift to be guarded and perfected, and a gift to be used not as an absolute end in itself, but as a means of ensuring the pursuit of all the truly human values.

And so, as a people you have a *shared responsibility for preserving freedom and for purifying it*. Like so many other things of great value, freedom is fragile. Saint Peter recognized this when he told the Christians never to use their freedom "as a pretext for evil"^[3]. Any distortion of truth or dissemination of non-truth is an offence against freedom; any manipulation of public opinion, any abuse of authority or power, or, on the other hand, just the omission of vigilance, endangers the heritage of a free people. But even more important, every contribution to promoting truth in charity consolidates freedom and builds up peace. When shared responsibility for freedom is truly accepted by all, a great new force is set at work for the service of humanity.

3. The same need for *shared responsibility* exists for Christians *in regard to the Gospel of Christ*.

The Gospel is a sacred deposit to be guarded and taught ever more effectively, a dynamic message to be lived and to be proclaimed by word and example. It is a gift that is given for the benefit of all; it requires effort from all. In varying degrees, everyone shares responsibility for the word of God, the word of divine truth, life-giving truth, liberating truth.

It is my hope and prayer today that the concerted contribution to freedom of the American community in Rome, and the worthy fulfilment of Christian responsibility for the Gospel, will become ever more effective for the good of humanity and the glory of God. And may God bless you in your daily activities and give you joy and peace in his holy name. God bless America!

[1] Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 76.

[2] *Ibid.* 63.

[3] *1 Petr.* 2, 16.

*AAS 72 (1980), p.635-638.

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