



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION
OF THE VATICAN EXHIBITION IN THE UNITED STATES ENTITLED
"THE VATICAN COLLECTION - THE PAPACY AND ART"**

Thursday, 29 April 1982

Dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to greet all of you this morning and to thank you for the deep interest that you are showing in the Vatican Museums. You have indeed become staunch friends and active supporters in an important aspect of cultural activity aimed at the service of man. Through your efforts to promote the patrimony of art that is preserved in the Vatican, you are giving an eloquent testimony to your esteem for art and for its role in helping to uplift the human spirit to the uncreated source of all beauty.

In its constant concern not to neglect the spiritual dimension of man's nature, and to urge the world to direct its gaze upwards to God – the Designer and Creator of the universe – the Holy See welcomes your devoted collaboration with the Vatican Museums as they strive to communicate to as many people as possible all the cultural benefits of that artistic heritage of which they are the custodian.

In particular, I am happy that our meeting today coincides with the official announcement of the Vatican Exhibition in the United States, entitled "The Vatican Collection – The Papacy and Art". This unprecedented event, which was fostered by Cardinal Cooke as a result of my own visit to the United States, immediately found the ready and generous cooperation of so many distinguished persons, a number of whom are here today. This important initiative, jointly organized by the Vatican Museums and the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York, in collaboration with the Art Institute of Chicago and the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, likewise received the enthusiastic welcome of the Archdioceses of New York, Chicago and San

Francisco. These three Archdioceses are all worthily represented here, and in the case of San Francisco by the Ordinary himself, Archbishop Quinn. My special gratitude goes to all the representatives of the Museums involved and especially to the Directors thereof.

In accordance with the purpose of the Exhibition itself, the works of art will begin to relate the long and interesting relationship between the Papacy and art throughout the centuries. Above all, these works of art will have a contribution to make to the men and women of our day. They will speak of history, of the human condition in its universal challenge, and of the endeavors of the human spirit to attain the beauty to which it is attracted. And, yes! These works of art will speak of God, because they speak of man created in the image and likeness of God; and in so many ways they will turn our attention to God himself.

And thus the history of the Church repeats itself: her esteem for art and culture is renewed at this moment and in this generation as in the past. And all of this is because, as I stated in my first Encyclical: “The Church’s fundamental function in every age and particularly in our is to direct man’s gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God...”.

Through you, dear friends, I extend my gratitude to all who assist you in this mission of service – a splendid service rendered through art. I pray that your enthusiasm will sustain you and inspire others, and that God will bless this project and all your other worthy activities. And may the Lord’s peace and joy fill your hearts and your homes today and always. Thank you once again.

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