



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Wednesday, 8 March 1989

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. I am particularly happy to welcome you, *the Metropolitans of the United States*, and with you my co-workers in the Roman Curia on the occasion of this special Assembly. This historic meeting which begins today is an opportunity to give a clearer expression to the bonds of ecclesial and ministerial communion which unite us. We already know each other well, since one of the first pastoral visits of my Pontificate was to the United States in 1979. During that visit I was able to learn a great deal about the Church in your country: I had a chance to listen to and observe, to speak and pray with the people of the East and Midwest. In 1983 you came to Rome on your *ad Limina* visits and I had the opportunity of learning more about your work. In 1987 I was pleased to accept your kind invitation to make my second visit to the United States, this time concentrating on the regions of the South and West. And finally, last year you came again for your *ad Limina* visits, during which time we reflected once more on aspects of our common pastoral mission.

Thus on several occasions in the past, I had the opportunity to express my gratitude for the way in which the Church in the United States, and particularly you its pastors, welcomed my visits there, as well as to manifest my appreciation of your pastoral zeal as I received each of you individually. At this time, I would like to voice again those same sentiments.

2. Today, then, dear brothers, as we continue our journey of faith together, I welcome you who are here precisely because of the office you hold. As Metropolitans you are in a special position to represent and to express the concerns of the particular Churches in your country.

We have come together to consider important matters regarding ecclesial life in the United States.

Our gathering is the continuation of an exchange a truly open exchange, which aims to strengthen our *partnership in the Gospel*. We do so with an organic view of our mission as Bishops in mind, a view which “must take into account the perennial exigencies of the Gospel; it must also express the indisputable priorities of the life of the Church today, both in her universal needs and in the special requirements of the Church in the United States. At the same time it must faithfully reflect *the call of the Second Vatican Council to reform and renewal*” (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio ad quosdam episcopos Foederatarum Civitatum Americae Septemtrionalis limina Apostolorum visitantes*, 1, die 31 maii 1988: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XI, 2 [1988] 1969).

At the heart of our concern is “Evangelization in the Context of the Culture and Society of the United States with particular emphasis on the Role of the Bishop as Teacher of the Faith”. From the outset, I would ask you to discuss the urgent task of evangelization from the perspective of the Bishop as *teacher of the Faith*. In this precise context, you are invited to reflect on the agents, methods and beneficiaries of evangelization. Your mission as authentic teachers of the faith has as its purpose the building up of the Body of Christ. You, united with the Bishop of Rome, are the pillars upon which rests all the work of evangelization. Hence the strength and vitality of the local Church depend to a great extent on the steadfastness of your faith, hope and love.

3. As Pastor of the Universal Church, I wish to *encourage you in your ministry*. I am fully conscious of the challenges you face in bringing the Gospel message to a world that does not often readily accept it. Your people experience the difficulties of being Christians in today’s world. Yet at the same time they search for direction in following the path marked out by Christ. In these days together we shall attempt to clarify *our own vision* of where the Lord wishes to lead us and his people as we stand on the threshold of the third Millennium of Christianity. We can be confident in the outcome of our efforts because we know that the Lord of the Vineyard is in our midst. He is the one who has chosen us as his servants to carry out the mission of evangelization. In the words of Saint Paul, we have been “set apart for the Gospel of God... the Gospel concerning his Son” (*Rom. 1, 1.3*). As such, we accept his call and we do so joyfully. But we do not hesitate to turn to him in prayer for greater strength and guidance. This is why all our discussions will be placed in the context of prayer and will culminate in our celebration of the Eucharist together at the tomb of Saint Peter.

Let us go forward then, invoking the powerful intercession of Mary Immaculate, and trusting in the knowledge that the Lord is ready to assist us in our pastoral endeavors, for he has sent us his Spirit to be with us and to guide us in all truth and love. Dear brothers: *in the power of the Holy Spirit* let us continue to make every effort to assist all the Catholic people of the United States to proclaim by *the holiness of their lives* that “Jesus Christ is Lord” (*Eph. 2, 11*).

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