



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PROMOTERS OF THE
POPE « JOHN PAUL II CULTURAL CENTER »**

Thursday, 30 May 1996

*Dear Cardinal Maida,
Your Eminences,
Your Excellencies,
Dear Friends,*

It is with joy that I welcome you here to the Vatican for the *blessing the cornerstone of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center*, to be built in Washington, your nation's capital. I am deeply grateful to you, friends and supporters of this project, and I am grateful as well to the members of the Cardinal Club of Detroit, whose work on behalf of vocations and in support of the Archbishop of Detroit makes an important contribution to the Church's evangelizing mission in your part of the United States. To all of you I offer warm greetings.

The Pope John "Paul II Cultural Center" is an initiative which has been inspired from the beginning by the desire to create a Center in which the teachings of the Bishops of Rome, the Successors of the Apostle Peter, will be studied, discussed and disseminated. It is not to be a monument to any one person, even if it bears his name, but to *the centrality and continuity of the petrine ministry in the Church*. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, Christ instituted in Peter "a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity, faith and fellowship" (*Lumen Gentium*, 18. 2). The papal magisterium is a privileged channel of the dialogue between faith and culture. In defending the deposit of faith and applying the teachings of Christ to the questions and concerns raised by successive generations, that magisterium as it were "incarnates" the Gospel message in the circumstances of every time and place. The teachings of the Roman Pontiffs are an integral part of the development of the Church's understanding of her own nature and mission in the world, and whatever is done to deepen knowledge of that patrimony, and to communicate it, constitutes a very valuable service to

God's People.

It gives me great joy to know that people from all parts of the United States have joined together to turn the idea the Cultural Center into a reality. The cornerstone, containing a part taken from the area of the tomb of St Peter in the Vatican Basilica, will serve to symbolize *the Center's union of purpose with the evangelizing efforts of the Successors of Peter*. Through its programs of research and study, as a public forum and as a resource for scholars, the Center will seek to make a specific contribution to Catholic intellectual life. It will examine the many links between the message salvation and human culture (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 58). It will promote a fruitful exchange between people of different backgrounds in their approach to fundamental moral and religious questions. As place which will welcome people who simply wish to learn more about their faith or to gain a deeper appreciation its implications, the Center will endeavor to make the Catholic community and society at large more clearly aware the treasures our Christian heritage.

I am particularly pleased that the Center will have a number of endowed Academic Chairs, representing various cultural traditions. In fact, human culture necessarily has a historical and social aspect, giving rise to a plurality of cultures (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 53). Today the world's cultures interact in a way which challenges those who preach the Christian message to consider and understand more deeply the human, social context within which people strive for fulfillment.

In Baltimore last October 1 put before American Catholics the need to challenge certain aspects of their own culture. "Sometimes, witnessing to Christ will mean drawing out of a culture the full meaning of its noblest intentions, a fullness that is revealed in Christ. At other times, witnessing to Christ means challenging that culture, especially when the *truth about the human person* is under assault. America has always wanted to be a land of the free. Today, the challenge facing America is to find freedom's fulfillment in the truth: the truth that is intrinsic to human life created in God's image and likeness, the truth that is written on the human heart, the truth that can be known by reason and can therefore form the basis of a profound and universal dialogue between people about the direction they must give to their lives and their activities" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Homilia in « Camden Yards »*, 6, die 8 oct. 1995: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XVIII, 2 (1995) 787). The new Cultural Center must take up this task with competence and enthusiasm, and its goal must be to exercise a leadership role in equipping American Catholicism to meet the cultural challenges of the new Millennium.

I cordially endorse and bless your efforts. I commend you to the loving care of Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, and I invoke the grace and peace of Almighty God upon you and your families.

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