



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF PAUL VI  
TO THE CARDINALS AND BISHOPS  
FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

*Monday, 15 September 1975*

*Venerable Brothers,*

As the United States exults in her first native-born Saint, and as the whole world recognizes the authentic fruits of sanctity produced in your beloved country, we wish to extend to you our joyful felicitations in Christ Jesus. We are one with you in the extraordinary joy of this event, just as we are one with you in all the successes and disappointments, the burdens and challenges of your apostolic ministry.

We share, moreover, Brethren, your hopes for the future. Indeed, our hope for America is so great that we look forward in prayerful expectation, if God so wills, to a “second spring” in the life of the Church in the land of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton. For we are convinced that the action of the Holy Spirit is ever intense in the midst of your people, stirring up new fruits of holiness and justice, and leading many to discover that the message of the Cross is truly “the power of God” (1 Cor. 1, 18).

And as we turn our thoughts to the future, we pray that the faithful will open their hearts ever more to the word of God and be increasingly receptive to the word of Christ. Thus with Saint Paul we do not hesitate to say to you, the Bishops of this great Church: “. . . proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it. Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience but do all with patience and the intention of teaching . . . Make the preaching of the Good News your life’s work in thoroughgoing service” (2 Tim. 4, 2. 5). And we are confident that the merits of Christ will continue to produce great holiness in all walks of life.

The very meaning, however, of the Canonization of Saint Elizabeth Seton impels us to express our good wishes, filled with loving hope, for Religious Life in the United States. Through you, the Bishops, we say to all the Religious: “Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith” (Hebr. 12, 2). Jesus, and Jesus alone, is our wisdom, our justice, our

sanctification, our redemption (Cfr. *1 Cor.* 1, 30).

Through the powerful example of joyful love and of selfless service rendered by Religious, may the young people of America again find attraction in Christ's invitation to follow him and to be witnesses of the transcendence of his love. Our earnest prayer therefore for all Religious is that they may base all their activity on the power of God and not on the deceptive wisdom of the world, and that they may recognize for their lives the absolute necessity of prayer and of the transforming power of the Eucharist: source of all the Church's power (Cfr. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10). After the shining example of Elizabeth Seton may they have renewed conviction that Christ offers them complete fulfillment in their vocation of consecrated love and ecclesial service.

Our thoughts on this occasion likewise turn spontaneously to parochial and other Catholic schools in your nation. We bless the providence of God that raised up Mother Seton to inaugurate this important work. We render homage to those who have expended their lives to communicate Christ through the apostolate of the school, and to give to generations of young Americans true education imbued with Christian principles. In this regard, Brethren, we know the difficulties involved in preserving the Catholic schools, and the uncertainties of the future. And yet we rely on the help of God and on your own zealous collaboration and untiring efforts, so that the Catholic schools can continue, despite grave obstacles, to fulfill their providential role at the service of genuine Catholic education, and at the service of your country.

The example of Saint Elizabeth Seton presents an ever urgent challenge to the entire Church of God and in particular to her fellow citizens. We pray that the Church in the United States will indeed be faithful to her mission on behalf of those who endure suffering in various forms-spiritual and material poverty, sickness, loneliness, lack of understanding, deprivation of rights-on behalf of those on the margin of society, those without hope. Despite the secularism of the modern world, which we must confront with the wisdom of the Cross-a secularism that detests truth, sanctifies hedonism, consecrates violence, denies liberty and justice, and destroys life-millions of our brothers and sisters are calling out from their need and misery. And if we listen we can hear what Philip heard-the urgent call and anguished plea of the crowd: "We wish to see Jesus" (*Io.* 12, 21). And We must show Jesus to the world. Jesus and no substitute.

And finally let us express our great confidence in the intercession of Elizabeth Seton for the true progress of ecumenism in your country, in which much has been done to promote Christian brotherhood and mutual love. With the Second Vatican Council we would exhort all your people "to remember that the more purely they strive to live according to the Gospel, the more they are fostering and even practising Christian unity" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 7). And so we do not cease to call for renewal, convinced as we are " that conversion of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement and can rightly be called «spiritual ecumenism»" (*Ibid.* 8).

Beloved Brethren, there are many other things that we would like to speak to you about. But our message today is one of deep gratitude for your ministry and of fraternal affection and esteem for you and for our brother Bishops at home. It is, moreover, a message of supreme confidence in Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and in the power of his Cross and Resurrection. And as we send our paternal greetings to our Catholic sons and daughters, we likewise cordially invoke upon all the citizens of the United States the blessings of true progress and peace, with liberty and justice for all!