



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO AUTHORITIES AND PEOPLE OF ALASKA** Fairbanks Airport (Alaska)

Wednesday, 2 May 1984 Praised be Jesus Christ!

*Mr. President, dear people of Alaska, esteemed citizens of America,*1. It gives me great pleasure to visit Alaska once again, and from this northern State to send a *greeting of special warmth and affection* to all the citizens of the United States of America. As you know, today I have begun a pastoral journey that will take me to Korea, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Thailand. And I am delighted that this pilgrimage enables me to stop here in Fairbanks and to be among you! I am deeply honored by the presence of President Reagan, who himself is just returning from an important trip to China. Mr. President, I thank you for your kind welcome on my arrival, and I wish to reaffirm through you my friendship and esteem for all the citizens of your great nation. My thanks go as well to Bishop Whelan for his much appreciated invitation to the Diocese of Fairbanks. I also extend my good wishes to Bishop Kaniecki, and I pray that the Lord will grant him many joyful years of service to the Church. I would also offer a word of greeting to the Cardinal and Bishops of the United States Episcopal Conference who have shown their fraternal union with me by coming here on this happy occasion.2. When I arrived on my first visit to your beautiful State, dear people of Alaska, I remember being welcomed by a lovely little child, Mollie Marie, who reached out and handed me a bouquet of forget-me-nots, your State flower. Shortly afterwards, that little girl was called home to her heavenly Father, but her loving gesture is not forgotten and her memory is held in blessing. I found in what she did at that time a living truth about the people of the vast Alaskan territory: that in your thoughts and in your prayers you remember the Pope. Today I am here in person to give you the assurance that I have not forgotten you. Even when I am miles away, I hold the people of Alaska and those of the whole of the United States close to me in my heart. I do not forget you, for we are linked together by bonds of friendship, of faith and of love.3. In some ways, Alaska can be considered today as *a cross-roads of the world*. President Reagan is returning from visiting the beloved people of China, even as I am making my way to a neighboring area in the Far East. The city of Fairbanks reminds us also of another direction for it is called "The Heart of the Golden North". Here in this vast State sixty-five languages are spoken and peoples of many diverse backgrounds find a common home with the Aleuts, Eskimos and Indians. This *wonderful diversity* provides the context in which each person, each family, each ethnic group is challenged to live in harmony and concord, one with the other.4. To achieve this aim requires a constant openness to each other on the part of each individual and group. An openness of heart, a readiness to accept differences, and an ability to listen to each other's viewpoint without prejudice. Openness to others, by its very nature, excludes selfishness in any form. It is expressed in a dialogue that is honest and frank-one that is based on mutual respect. Openness to others begins in the heart. As I stated at the beginning of this year in my Message for the World Day of Peace, if men and women hope to transform society, they must begin by changing their own hearts first. Only with a "new heart" can one

rediscover "clear-sightedness and impartiality with freedom of spirit, the sense of justice with respect to the rights of man, the sense of equity with global solidarity between the rich and the poor, mutual trust and fraternal love" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Nuntius scripto datus ob diem I mensis Ianuarii anni MCMLXXXIV, paci inter nationes fovendae dicatum*, 3, die 8 dec. 1983: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI, 2 (1983) 1282). Here in Fairbanks you have the opportunity to rediscover such values and to express them in your harmonious relationship with your neighbor - which reflects the stupendous harmony of nature which pervades this region. May God grant you the strength to express this harmony in your own lives, in your relationship with others. May he give you the courage to share generously and selflessly the blessings that you yourselves have received in abundance. God bless America! © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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