



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE METROPOLITANS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CONCELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST***

*Tomb of Saint Peter
Saturday, 11 March 1989*

Dear Brothers,

It is most fitting that these days of prayer and consultation should culminate in this concelebration of the Eucharist, for it is here at the altar that the Church is revealed in her most intimate nature as a hierarchical communion of faith, hope and love.

We celebrate this Eucharist at the tomb of Saint Peter, who, together with the other Apostles, was chosen by the Lord to be the foundation of his Church. The calling of these Apostles is deeply related, both historically and in the order of grace, to their experience of Christ and to their profession of faith in him. As we venerate the memory of Peter, we ask his intercession that we may find the inspiration and strength we need in order to imitate the Apostles in bearing courageous witness to Christ.

The Lord's words to Peter: "Do you love me?... Freed my lambs... Tend my sheep" are addressed to each of his Successors, the Bishops of Rome. But they also apply to all the Bishops, the Successors of the Apostles, who are entrusted with the care of a flock that is the Lord's and not their own. Like Peter, what is asked of us is a love that puts its full trust in God and that perseveres to the end even in the face of misunderstanding and rejection. It is the love that "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things".

Today's liturgy reminds us once again that Christ appeared as a sign of contradiction in the midst of those whom he came to save. In the darkness and confusion created by sin, he was destined to give his life as a ransom for many. Invoking the intercession of our Mother Mary who lived this

redemptive mystery to the full, and of Saints Peter and Paul, we pray that God will continue to pour out his blessings on the whole Church in the United States. May he also bestow upon each of you, dear brothers, a full measure of his gifts as you seek to fulfill your mission as teachers of the faith and evangelizers in your beloved country, which is blessed with the protection of Mary Immaculate, the Mother of the Church.

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