



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS  
POPE JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE JAMES MADISON COUNCIL  
OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**

*23 May 1997*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is indeed a pleasure for me to welcome to the Vatican the *James Madison Council of the Library of Congress of the United States*. I am aware that you are dedicated to assisting the Library of Congress in sharing its immense intellectual and cultural treasures with the Nation and with the world. The patrimony of human thought, cultural achievement and religious truth contained in the world's libraries is not only a monument to past human endeavor; it is the solid ground on which each new generation can strive to build a better future. To ignore this treasure would be for humanity to condemn itself to existing and working in a wasteland. Our own age particularly needs to recover the accumulated wisdom of the past.

Today, the exchange of knowledge between individuals and between different cultures and civilizations, and especially the sharing of the documentary memory of a people's historical experience, takes place more and more through the new technologies of instant communication. Thus you are particularly interested in ensuring that the uplifting and instructive record of human experience is made available in the new communications media. Herein lies an important dimension of your interest in the *Vatican Apostolic Library*, which has benefitted in the past from the technical assistance of the Library of Congress.

I particularly wish to thank The Madison Council for its very successful sponsorship of *Rome Reborn*, an unprecedented exhibition of Vatican treasures. I pray that God will continue to bless your initiatives. May his strength and peace be with you and your loved ones!

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