



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO A GROUP OF REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES***

Monday, 26 April 1976

Dear Friends,

You have asked to visit us during your stay in Rome, and we are happy to be able to accede to your request. We welcome you both as friends and as Representatives of the Congress of the United States-members of the legislative branch of your Government. We extend our welcome all the more cordially at a time when you and your fellow-citizens are celebrating the Bicentennial of your nation.

Addressing you as legislators of America we willingly speak to you a word of encouragement, exhorting you to maintain with reverence and pride the salutary tenets on which your country was established. At every turn, your Bicentennial speaks to you of moral principles, religious convictions, inalienable rights given by the Creator.

Of necessity your anniversary engages the reflection of all citizens on the equality of human dignity and destiny, and on the rich ethnic background of the United States. And you personally are summoned by your celebration to reflect anew on the role of government, as instituted precisely to secure for all the people inalienable rights -and "among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". By the sacred trust committed to you by the people, and in loyalty to your very Declaration of Independence, you have been called to the service of defending life and of promoting true liberty and happiness among your people. And we cannot but praise the significance of your gesture as once again you pledge allegiance to a Republic that is "one nation under God".

We earnestly hope that these reflections and this commemoration of your Bicentennial will

constitute a rededication to those sound moral principles formulated by your Founding Fathers and enshrined forever in your history. There is so much in your tradition to urge you to look forward to the future with trust in God. May your land be indeed a land of upright conduct in personal and public life—a land where truth is respected, and where brotherly love is the criterion of greatness. We willingly join our voice to your own prayerful expression of challenge and resolution: “America! America! God mend thine every flaw, Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law”.

And may you, the lawmakers of this land, and all your illustrious colleagues in government, recall with pride your role of service, and fulfill with dignity your solemn charge before the people.

In our own role of a universal ministry and of worldwide service to humanity—as a friend of your people and every people—it is our prayer that America may go forward to a new era, humbly expressing gratitude for the immense blessings received from the Creator. With openness and concern for the needs of the world, may she guard the spiritual and moral heritage of her past, in order to ensure a future “with liberty and justice for all”.