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## Miami, Florida

*Remarks at the Arrival Ceremony for Pope John Paul II. September 10, 1987*

Your Holiness, after an audience with you 5 years ago in Vatican City, I met a group of American priests and seminarians who were studying in Rome. And when I happened to mention my hope that one day you would return to the United States and that perhaps this time your visit would extend to the South and the West, when I mentioned this, those seminarians broke into applause. Today, Your Holiness, you begin just such a return visit, and today all America applauds.

In a document of the Second Vatican Council that you helped to draft, it is written: "In language intelligible to every generation, the church should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which men ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come."

"In language intelligible to every generation"—certainly no one can speak with greater force to our own generation than you yourself. In Poland you experienced nazism and communism. As Pope, you suffered a terrorist attack that nearly claimed your life. Still you proclaim that the central message of our own time, that the central message of all time, is not hatred but love.

During your papacy, you have taken this message to some 68 countries. You have celebrated Mass in the ancient capitals of Europe. You have spoken words of truth and comfort on the African savannah. You have visited new churches on the islands of the Pacific. You've addressed vast gatherings throughout South America and the Far East. Now you have come back to the United States, the nation of citizens from all nations.

If I might just interject something, your Holiness, I know that in your travels you've made it a point to speak to people in their own language. Well, here in Miami I have a suspicion that you will find many in your audience eager to hear you speak the beautiful language of Spain.

But in this, the very month of your visit, we in the United States will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of our Constitution. That document says a great deal about the fundamental values in which we Americans believe. In the words of the distinguished Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain: "The Founding Fathers were neither metaphysicians nor theologians, but their philosophy of life and their political philosophy, their notion of natural law and of human rights, were permeated with concepts worked out by Christian reason and backed up by an unshakeable religious feeling."

From the first, then, our nation embraced the belief that the individual is sacred and that as God himself respects human liberty, so, too, must the state. In freedom we Americans have in these 200 years built a great country, a country of goodness and abundance. Indeed, Your Holiness, it is precisely because we believe in freedom, because we respect the liberty of the individual in the economic as well as the political sphere, that we have achieved such prosperity.

We are justly proud of the Marshall plan, whose 40th anniversary was celebrated in Europe earlier this year. In Europe and elsewhere, we continue to place our might on the side of human dignity. In Latin America and Asia, we're supporting the expansion of human freedom, in particular, the powerful movement toward democracy. And yet we Americans admit freely to our shortcomings. As you exhort us, we will listen. With all our hearts, we yearn to make this good land better still.

In Florida and South Carolina, in Louisiana and Texas, in Arizona, California, and Michigan, tens of thousands of Americans—more than 50 million Catholics—will greet you. They do great works, America's Catholics, in the name of their church.

Here in the United States, American Catholics put their faith into action in countless ways: maintaining parochial schools that give underprivileged children in our inner cities the chance to receive a good education, supporting the AIDS hospices established by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, and perhaps simply helping to put on a fundraising dinner for the local parish. Abroad, American Catholics likewise seek to translate their faith into deeds, whether supporting missionaries in distant lands or helping America's Knights of Columbus restore the facade of St. Peter's in Rome.

But it will not be Catholics alone who greet you. Protestants of every denomination, Jews, Moslems, even many with no defined faith at all—Americans of every kind and degree or belief will wish Your Holiness well, responding to your moral leadership. Today's Florida sunshine is no warmer than the affection that you will meet.

I began a moment ago by quoting from one document of the Second Vatican Council. Permit me to close by quoting from a second: "By the hidden and kindly mystery of God's will a supernatural solidarity reigns among men. A consequence of this is that one person's holiness helps others." Today Americans feel this solidarity. And we thank you for the courage and sanctity, the kindness and wisdom, with which you have done so much to help our troubled world.

On behalf of all Americans, Your Holiness, welcome back.

*Note: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. at Miami International Airport.*