



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE "ANCIENT AND HONORABLE
ARTILLERY COMPANY OF MASSACHUSETTS"**

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 10 October 1987*

Dear Friends,

1. I am pleased to welcome to the Vatican today members of *the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts*. In greeting you, I am reminded of my recent pastoral visit to the United States which helped me appreciate in an even deeper way the rich ethnic and cultural pluralism of your country, as well as your youthful vitality and giftedness.

My thoughts also go back to my first visit to America, eight years ago, and more particularly to the time I spent in Boston, when many of you perhaps, and certainly many of your friends and neighbors, gave me such a warm and courteous welcome. I am happy to have this occasion to repay you for your most gracious hospitality.

2. Like the Swiss Guard which generously serves here at the Vatican, your renowned organization can boast a *distinguished and glorious history*. What began three and a half centuries ago as an organized effort to provide protection for the early settlers in New England has in its subsequent development carried out a variety of important services: framing and administering laws, promoting industry and trade, contributing to the education and well-being of your fellow citizens. You have been involved, in a special way, in many charitable activities, both as a Company and as individuals. In this, you have been faithful to the Golden Rule: "*Love your neighbor as yourself*".

3. The commitment of generous service is truly *a commitment of selfless love*. Forgetting yourselves and your own personal preferences and plans, you seek to be attentive to the needs of others. And if it is authentic love, then it embraces all others, without distinction of persons, with

deep respect and concern for the God-given dignity of every one, from the moment of conception until the moment of natural death.

We who are followers of Christ believe that such love is only possible when it is founded on the love of God. As Saint John writes, "Love, then, consists in this: *not that we have loved God but that he has loved us* and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins" (1Jo. 4, 10). This is a great source of consolation and hope: the fact that God has loved us, that God's love accompanies us every day of our lives.

I pray that each of you will always know and rejoice in the love of God our Father. In this love, you will find the strength to continue to offer loving service to others, especially to the poor.

May the Lord grant his abundant blessings to you all your loved ones.

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