



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HONORABLE GEORGE W. BUSH
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***

Friday, 4 June 2004

Mr. President,¹ I offer a *warm welcome* to you and to Mrs. Bush, and to the distinguished Delegation accompanying you. I also extend a cordial and affectionate greeting to all the people of the United States whom you represent. I thank you for wishing to meet with me again, in spite of the difficulties presented by your own many commitments during this present visit to Europe and Italy, and by my own departure tomorrow morning for a meeting with young people in Switzerland.² You are visiting Italy to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Rome and to *honor the memory of the many American soldiers* who gave their lives for their country and for the freedom of the peoples of Europe. I join you in recalling the sacrifice of those valiant dead and in asking the Lord that the mistakes of the past, which gave rise to appalling tragedies, may never again be repeated. Today I too think back with great emotion on the many Polish soldiers who died for the freedom of Europe. Our thoughts also turn today to the twenty years in which the Holy See and the United States have enjoyed formal diplomatic relations, established in 1984 under President Reagan. These relations have promoted mutual understanding on great issues of common interest and practical cooperation in different areas. I send my regards to President Reagan and to Mrs. Reagan, who is so attentive to him in his illness. I would also like to express my esteem for all the Representatives of the United States to the Holy See, together with my appreciation for the competence, sensitivity and great commitment with which they have favored the development of our relations.³ Mr. President, your visit to Rome takes place at *a moment of great concern* for the continuing situation of grave unrest in the Middle East, both in Iraq and in the Holy Land. You are very familiar with the unequivocal position of the Holy See in this regard, expressed in numerous documents, through direct and indirect contacts, and in the many diplomatic efforts which have been made since you visited me, first at [Castelgandolfo on 23 July 2001](#), and again in this Apostolic Palace on 28 May 2002.⁴ It is the evident desire of everyone that this situation now be normalized as quickly as possible with the *active participation of the international community* and, in particular, the United Nations Organization, in order to ensure a speedy return of Iraq's sovereignty, in conditions of security for all its people. The recent appointment of a Head of State in Iraq and the formation of an interim Iraqi government are an encouraging step towards the attainment of this goal. May a similar hope for peace also be rekindled in the Holy Land and lead to new negotiations, dictated by a sincere and determined commitment to dialogue, between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.⁵ The *threat of*

international terrorism remains a source of constant concern. It has seriously affected normal and peaceful relations between States and peoples since the tragic date of 11 September 2001, which I have not hesitated to call "a dark day in the history of humanity". In the past few weeks other deplorable events have come to light which have troubled the civic and religious conscience of all, and made more difficult a serene and resolute commitment to shared human values: in the absence of such a commitment neither war nor terrorism will ever be overcome. May God grant strength and success to all those who do not cease to hope and work for understanding between peoples, in respect for the security and rights of all nations and of every man and woman.⁶ At the same time, Mr. President, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the great commitment of your Government and of your nation's numerous humanitarian agencies, particularly those of Catholic inspiration, to *overcoming the increasingly intolerable conditions in various African countries*, where the suffering caused by fratricidal conflicts, pandemic illnesses and a degrading poverty can no longer be overlooked. I also continue to follow with great appreciation your commitment to the *promotion of moral values* in American society, particularly with regard to respect for life and the family.⁷ A fuller and deeper understanding between *the United States of America and Europe* will surely play a decisive role in resolving the great problems which I have mentioned, as well as so many others confronted by humanity today. May your visit, Mr. President, give new and powerful impetus to such cooperation. Mr. President, as you carry out your lofty mission of service to your nation and to world peace, I assure you of my prayers and cordially invoke upon you God's blessings of wisdom, strength and peace. May God bestow peace and freedom upon all mankind! *Remarks on the occasion of the award of the "Presidential Medal of Freedom"* I am grateful, Mr. President, for this thoughtful gesture. May the desire for freedom, peace and a more humane world symbolized by this medal inspire men and women of good will in every time and place. God bless

America!

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