The original documents are located in Box 42, “12/16/76 - Remarks at the Pageant of Peace Prior to Lighting the National Christmas Tree” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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REMARKS AT CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF PEACE
AND LIGHTING THE NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1976

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF PEACE

THANK YOU, MR. DIXON
MR. AMBASSADOR (SEVILLA-SACASA)
SECRETARY KLEPPE
MAYOR WASHINGTON
DIRECTOR EVERHARDT
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN
AS OUR BICENTENNIAL YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE,
IT IS ESPECIALLY APPROPRIATE TO GATHER ONCE MORE AROUND THIS
TRADITIONAL SYMBOL OF FAMILY TIES AND FRIENDLY REUNIONS --
OUR NATION'S CHRISTMAS TREE. IN DOING SO, WE COMBINE
OUR YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION OF HISTORICAL EVENTS WITH A PERSONAL
REDEDICATION TO TIMELESS VALUES.

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS HAS NOT CHANGED OVER THE
COURSE OF 20 CENTURIES: PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TOWARDS
MEN. THAT MESSAGE IS AS INSPIRING TODAY AS IT WAS WHEN
IT WAS FIRST PROCLAIMED TO THE SHEPHERDS NEAR BETHLEHEM.
IN 1976, AMERICA HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH PEACE AND
A SIGNIFICANT RESTORATION OF DOMESTIC HARMONY.
BUT TRUE PEACE IS MORE THAN THE ABSENCE OF BATTLE.

IT IS ALSO THE ABSENCE OF PREJUDICE AND THE TRIUMPH OF UNDERSTANDING. BROTHERHOOD AMONG ALL PEOPLES MUST BE THE SOLID CORNERSTONE OF A LASTING PEACE. IT HAS BEEN A SUSTAINING FORCE FOR OUR NATION AND REMAINS A GUIDING STAR FOR OUR FUTURE.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS IS OBSERVED ON EVERY CONTINENT. THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS THE SAME. BUT THE FEELINGS THAT ARE GENERATED BETWEEN FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS ARE EQUALLY STRONG AND WARM.
IN A FEW MOMENTS, I WILL TURN THE SWITCH THAT LIGHTS UP
OUR NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE. AS BEAUTIFUL AS THAT TREE IS,
IT WILL BE ONLY A SYMBOL IF ITS LIGHT IS NOT MATCHED BY THE
GLOW OF LOVE IN OUR HEARTS.

IT IS MY PERSONAL PRAYER ON THIS CHRISTMAS OF 1976,
THAT THE TREE WHICH I LIGHT TONIGHT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING --
THAT EACH OF YOU WILL ALSO LIGHT A FLAME OF LOVE --
LOVE THAT IS REFLECTED IN THE EYES OF ALL OUR BROTHERS AND
SISTERS ACROSS THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD.
NOW, BETTY JOINS ME IN WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

THANK YOU, AND GOD BLESS YOU.

END OF TEXT