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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS

JFK STADIUM

4:43 P.M. EDT

Your Eminence Cardinal Knox, Papal Legate for His Holiness Pope Paul, Your Eminence Cardinal Krol, distinguished clergy from all over the world, dear friends:

I am deeply honored by your invitation to be with you at the conclusion of this 41st International Eucharistic Congress and to reiterate on behalf of all of the people of the United States of America our most heartfelt welcome to our many guests from all over the world.

It is an inspiring demonstration of all the world's hunger for peace and understanding these Congresses are able to unite citizens of more than 100 nations in common purpose and common prayer.

It is fitting that you gather here in the City of Brotherly Love where 200 years ago my country declared its national independence with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence. That reliance has never failed us and has been reinforced by the equally firm devotion of Americans to freedom of worship and freedom of conscience from all who have come to us throughout the centuries.

These fundamental freedoms are not only written into our Constitution and our laws but they are written in our hearts as well.

On this occasion we celebrate the Church's contribution to building a more peaceful world. We salute you for giving depth and direction to the world community in every age. For millions of men and women the Church has been the hospital for the soul, the school for the mind and the safe depository for moral ideals.

It has given unity and purpose to the affairs of man. It has been a vital institution for protecting and proclaiming the ultimate values of life itself. We are rightly concerned today about the rising tide of secularism across the world. I share your deep appreciation (apprehension) about the increased irreverence for life.

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The supreme value of every person to whom life is given by God is a belief that comes to us from the holy scriptures confirmed by all the great leaders of the Church.

Our commitment to the unique role of the family relationship is also basic to our faith. There are no adequate substitutes for father, mother and children bound together in a loving commitment to nurture and protect. No government, no matter how well-intentioned, can ever take the place of the family in the scheme of things. The family circle suggests a oneness similar to that of the Church family in that which we strive to achieve in the human family.

I remember a poem that my mother taught me as a young boy, by the great American poet Edwin Markham, which beautifully expresses the determination that we must move towards tolerance to love. It goes like this: "He drew a circle that shut me out; heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But love and I had the wit to win, we drew a circle that took him in."

I am moved that you have brought me in, within this great circle today, and by the spirit of love and service that animates it, I hope that we all, whatever our country or creed, will continue to draw larger and larger circles until that day in His good time when all God's people are one.

As we work together for a better world where our brothers and sisters are free from hunger and fear, let us keep our hearts free from pride and hate in the spirit of this old familiar prayer of the good St. Francis: "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me so love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy."

God bless and may you have a safe journey to your homes.

Thank you.

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(AT 4:52 P.M. EDT)