

**REMARKS OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**AT THE RECEPTION FOR THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ELECTION OF HIS HOLINESS, POPE FRANCIS**  
**APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**MARCH 13, 2023**

Your Eminences and Your Excellencies, members of the USCCB,  
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors & Heads of Mission accredited to the United States and to the Organization of American States,  
Esteemed members of the Houses of Congress,  
Dear Colleagues of the State Department, of the Federal Government and of the Inter-American and International organizations,  
Dear Colleagues from the Archdiocese of Washington and from the various Catholic agencies and organizations,  
Dear friends of the Nunciature,

It is an especial joy to welcome you to the Apostolic Nunciature on this significant occasion. Not only are we re-launching our annual reception, after an extended hiatus due to the pandemic, but we are hosting this event on the **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary** of the election of the Holy Father, Pope Francis.

We sometimes call the Nunciature the “Pope’s House”. So, in the name of Pope Francis, whose representative I am in this country, and together with my colleague, Msgr Juan Antonio Cruz Serrano, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the Organization of American States, I want to bid you all a warm welcome to the Pope’s House in Washington, D.C.! I am delighted to see so many people here this evening, representing the numerous facets of Catholic and diplomatic life in this great capital city. It is wonderful that you are here to mark this milestone in the pontificate of Pope Francis.

The completion of a decade as Bishop of Rome and Successor of St Peter naturally causes us to pause and reflect on the ministry of Pope Francis and to give thanks to God for sustaining the Church and her leaders in every age. My colleagues here have suggested that I dedicate three minutes of my speech to **each** year of the pontificate ... and even though I know you would enjoy that, I will limit myself instead to just two observations at this particular moment for the Church and the world.

The first observation is a note of appreciation for the warm relations that the Holy See maintains with the Government and people of the United States. These relations have seen some high points during the pontificate of Pope Francis: the visits of Presidents Obama, Trump and Biden to the Vatican; the beautiful gesture of both President Biden and Vice President Harris, who came personally to the Nunciature to sign the book of condolences for the death of Pope Benedict. But, I suppose, the most significant moment in our bilateral relations during these past ten years has been the visit of Pope Francis to the United States in 2015.

Speaking during the official welcome ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House, Pope Francis addressed the people of this land with what we might call a signature appeal of his Pontificate, and I quote:

*I would like all men and women of good will in this great nation to support the efforts of the international community to protect the vulnerable in our world and to stimulate integral and inclusive models of development, so that our brothers and sisters everywhere may know the blessings of peace and prosperity which God wills for all his children.*

(Pope Francis, Address at Welcome Ceremony, White House South Lawn, Washington D.C., 23 September 2015.)

The Holy Father's engagement with the civil sphere, with national governments and multilateral organizations, always has this scope: to encourage solidarity among nations and peoples, to encourage collaboration and mutual assistance, to work for the good of poorer peoples and regions, and thus **to foster a culture of peace**. Together with an emphasis on the importance of religious freedom and the promotion of care for our common home, these are what we might call the "diplomatic priorities" of the Pontificate of Francis.

I should like to acknowledge the collaboration of the Government of this great nation in supporting many of these priorities. Thus, I am especially pleased to welcome members of Congress and friends from the State Department: I welcome, in particular, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Jacqueline Ramos.

I am very pleased to see so many guests of the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the Organization of American States here this evening; a special welcome to Secretary General of the OAS, Luis Almagro Lemes and to the Director of the Pan American Health Organization, Jarbas Barbosa Da Silva. Thank you all for your presence.

The second observation I want to make this evening concerns the Holy Father's ministry "*ad intra*", within the Church, over these past ten years. This, of course, is his principal concern and focus. Even if the Pope has a global role at the level of the community of nations, he is, in the final analysis, the Bishop of Rome and thus the visible principle of unity among the bishops of the world and for Catholics everywhere. In this role, the Holy Father has wished to encourage the emergence of a more missionary Church, present in the midst of a suffering humanity, to reveal the compassion of God.

Returning to the Pope's visit to these United States in 2015, I want to cite a few of his words to the Bishops, gathered in our own St Matthew's Cathedral, and I quote:

*It is not about preaching complicated doctrines, but joyfully proclaiming Christ who died and rose for our sake. The "style" of our mission should allow those who hear us to experience that the message is meant "for us" ... The path ahead, then, is dialogue among yourselves, dialogue in your presbyterates, dialogue with lay persons, dialogue with families, dialogue with society.*

(Pope Francis, Address to the Bishops, St Matthew's Cathedral, Washington D.C., 23 September 2015.)

Here the Pope reveals his hopes for the Church and the direction which he encourages us to take. Dialogue, leading to discovery, which opens up new paths for the missionary spirit so vital to the Church's life.

I wish to re-echo the Pope's words in 2015 in thanking this local Church for its missionary commitment and for its service of the marginalized and those most in need.

I am delighted to be able to welcome many of the Bishops here this evening, beginning with the President of the Conference, Archbishop Timothy Broglio. I greet the Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Gregory, his predecessor, Cardinal Wuerl, as well as Cardinals Cupich & Tobin.

A special word of welcome goes to Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development in Rome, who is visiting Washington in these days. I greet warmly also the representatives of many religious communities – not only Jesuits, by the way! – and of the many Catholic organizations and entities dedicated to making present the compassion of Christ to those who are suffering and to building up the body of Christ that is the Church in this land.

And I warmly welcome our ecumenical and inter-religious friends, who have joined us on this joyful occasion.

I ask you all then, my dear friends, as is customary on these occasions, to join me in a toast:

To the health and welfare of the people of the United States of America

And a complementary toast:

To Our Holy Father, Pope Francis on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his election!

Thank you, my dear friends, for your attention!