

Remarks at a Meeting With Pope Paul VI.

March 02, 1969

Your Holiness:

We are most honored to hear those eloquent words in behalf of our country, and I express my personal appreciation for the time that I have had to talk with you about some of the great issues which divide the world, but issues which, with leadership both by the temporal leaders and the spiritual leaders of the world, we may be able to resolve, and resolve them in an atmosphere of peace.

We all remember, in the United States, your visit, and we remember your coming to the United Nations and your appearance before thousands of Americans in Yankee Stadium, and millions on television. It left a memory that we will always carry very close to our hearts.

We know, as we sit here and consider the difficult material problems that we will have to deal with when we return to our own country, that what the world needs today is the spiritual and moral leadership which Your Holiness has stood for, stood for here in the Vatican and in your arduous travels to other nations in the world.

Your words have inspired us. The fact that we have your prayers will sustain us in the years ahead. We are confident that as we move forward, we shall be able to find those answers that will bring the world to which you have dedicated your life, and that world will be one of peace, and also one of freedom and justice for all people.

Note: The President spoke at approximately 5:30 p.m. in the Papal Salon at the Vatican. The remarks of Pope Paul VI, which preceded those of the President, were as follows:

Mr. President, we are very happy and deeply grateful, too, that your courtesy has made this visit possible at the close of your strenuous working journey through Europe.

In the past we have already had the honor of visits from you, but now you come to us in another capacity, with the heavy responsibilities of the President of the United States of America.

It is as such that we greet you, giving expression immediately to a warm and spontaneous wish: May you in your administration experience the deep satisfaction of making a real contribution to the total cessation of those conflicts now unfortunately in progress, and of putting an even more effective stop to the outbreak of new armed struggles, by following the sure way toward a lasting peace and promoting true prosperity by means of a widely based and fruitful understanding.

This is the mission which your great nation, Mr. President, along with the other members of the international community, is called upon to fulfill: a mission of peace, a mission of noble-hearted collaboration with all peoples, and particularly with the developing peoples, in mutual esteem, with respect for the fundamental freedoms of men and of nations, and in the promotion of genuine human values.

All peoples are closely bound together, now more than ever before, in a common destiny: the great worldwide effort to build on solid foundations the earthly city in which each individual lives and works.

An exalting and difficult task, this--it is one that calls for foresight, in order that while uncovering the immensity of mankind's needs, it may also realize the no less immense possibilities offered today, especially by science and technology employed in the service of man.

It is also a task that requires good, constructive, and generous ideas, noble desires, moral energy, a clear vision of reality, firm decision, courage to make choices, and persevering constancy in the way that is chosen.

It is therefore a task which has need of an assistance that cannot be physically measured, yet is absolutely indispensable; for unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it will labour in vain.
[Ps. 126: 1]

To construct this earthly city in unity, prosperity, wisdom, and concord, the Catholic Church, inspired by the Gospel message, will unfailingly continue to offer her disinterested and active contribution of moral energy and support.

That the serene vision of peace may ever shine in your mind and heart, Mr. President, to inspire and sustain your valiant efforts, our repeated good wishes go with you, and our heartfelt prayer accompanies you, as we invoke upon you and upon the people of the United States of America, who are so dear to us, abundant divine blessings.

Richard Nixon, Remarks at a Meeting With Pope Paul VI. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240827>