

# Remarks to American Priests and Students at the Vatican.

March 02, 1969

THIS IS INDEED a very great privilege for me to see this very distinguished group of Americans here on this memorable day, and this magnificent place. And when I noted that I was scheduled to visit the North American College--I understand there are some here from the North American College--I became a little concerned, because these days I suppose you could say this is one of the few colleges I could go to without having a demonstration against me. [Laughter]

If you will pardon a personal reference--I go back a few years, a few years to the time that I came here as Vice President of the United States in 1957 and Archbishop O'Connor<sup>1</sup> then welcomed me, and then on other occasions, too, he welcomed me--but I remember appearing at the college and meeting so many then.

<sup>1</sup>Archbishop Martin J. O'Connor, director of the college in 1957.

I did not expect then that I would come back now in the capacity I presently hold. I have been trying ever since then to get through the electoral college, but I finally made it. So here I am.

But I do want you to know Secretary of State Rogers, whom I am sure you can recognize from the picture he had on the cover of Time magazine a few weeks ago. It is more than you can say for me. My pictures don't do me justice.

But as we finish this trip and have this opportunity to meet you, one very serious thought comes to mind: As we have talked in the capitals of Europe with the leaders--with Prime Minister Wilson, with the King of the Belgians and the Prime Minister, with Dr. Kiesinger and members of his government in the Federal Republic, with Prime Minister Rumor and President Saragat in Italy, with President de Gaulle and members of his government in Paris--that over and over again, in addition to the subjects in international relations which are necessarily at the top of our agenda, the subject comes up of youth in the world, in every country and in America.

I spoke facetiously about it a moment ago. I do, however, now speak very seriously on that point. And I speak particularly of the very significant role that I believe you, you who are so young, you who have so much to give, you who have such an opportunity to lead the mission that you have in the years ahead, and it is this:

Wherever I went, as I talked to intellectuals, to government leaders and to others--and the Secretary of State confirmed that he had the same experience in the talks that he had--it seems that youth today in the so-called advanced countries have the same problem, those who are demonstrating, and some are, of course, simply demonstrating for the sake of demonstrating, but some deeply believe that their demonstrations are necessary.

The problem they have is that they are against, but too often they do not have anything to be for. And that is the problem of our time.

Here we find, looking at the United States of America, for example, that American youth, I think we could say, never had it so good materially. In terms of being able to get an education, if they have what it takes, they can get it. In terms of being able to get a job after they get the education, they can get them.

This is a seller's market, believe me, because the great companies, the law firms, and all the rest, are out searching for those who have completed their education, trying to bring them into their firms.

But what we find is that at this period when, from a material standpoint, young people never had a better outlook, that they still have, many of them, a sense of frustration, a sense that something is missing. And that is where you come in. It has been so truly written that man does not live by bread alone. And young people today need a sense of purpose, something to be for, a vision and idealism. You provide that. You provide it through the church which you serve and you provide it in a broader sense. We have to provide it also in our own capacities.

I think that as far as American youth is concerned, our purpose needs to be more than simply making our own country one that we can be proud of. We will do that. But it is also to meet our destiny of attempting to lead the world, along with others, on the paths that will bring real peace among nations, and beyond that, in seeing that America, because of its wealth which is unprecedented in the history of nations, does its share in helping the millions of people on this earth who are living at a subsistence level and who, without assistance, will never be able to enjoy even what the very minimum is in the United States.

These are some of the goals that I see for our Nation on the temporal side. There are other problems that we have on the spiritual side.

But all that I am really trying to say is this: We are both going down different roads toward the same destination, and that is to give to the country that we love a sense of mission, a sense of purpose, a sense of idealism, that will inspire the youth of America, make them proud of their country. And I am sure that we are going to do it, and I am sure that you will do it in your capacity.

Thank you very much.

*Note: The President spoke at 6:08 p.m. in the Salla Clementine at the Vatican.*

Richard Nixon, Remarks to American Priests and Students at the Vatican. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project

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