

**ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCE CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.**

As the Apostolic Nuncio, the representative of the Holy See and His Holiness Pope Francis to the United States, I want to welcome you to this Nunciature, which is the “house of the Pope”. This is where Pope Francis and his predecessors, Benedict XVI and John Paul II, stayed during their visits to the United States. We hold this reception on this date to celebrate the sixth anniversary of Pope Francis’ election.

For Catholics, the Holy Father is the successor of Saint Peter, who unites and leads Catholics around the world. How fitting that we should be gathered as a family in the “house of the Pope” – the house of our spiritual father! I am happy to greet the many bishops, priests, religious, and Catholic laity who are present this evening.

To all those of good will who have joined us this evening, I offer you a warm welcome. I am also happy to greet the many representatives of the government, members of the Cabinet, including the Secretary of Labor, the Honorable Alexander Acosta, and members of the State Department. Finally, I want to welcome my fellow ambassadors, representing their nations, as well as the Chiefs of Mission who are here with us tonight. I am sure there are many others who deserve acknowledgment; know that your presence is greatly appreciated.

Your presence here is a recognition of the important role the Holy Father in promoting the common good and peace in our world. Your presence indicates your openness in working with the Church to promote those values which help build a more just and well-ordered society. The Holy Father noted in his World Day of Peace Message, “politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions” and that “Politics is at the service of peace if it finds expression in the recognition of the gifts and abilities of each individual.”

Catholics and persons of faith are deeply interested in placing themselves at the service of peace, and Pope Francis, during these six years of his Pontificate, has attracted many to this service by his emphasis on the tenderness and mercy of God and the dignity of the human person. Always concerned about persons in their concrete situations, he never ceases to draw attention to those at the spiritual and existential peripheries.

For example, in keeping with his predecessor Pope John Paul II who stated that “the future of humanity passes through the family,” Pope Francis journeyed to Ireland in August for the World Meeting of Families to strengthen families, offering these words of exhortation: “God wants every family to be a beacon of the joy of his love in this world. What does this mean? It means that we, who have encountered God’s saving love, try, with or without words, to express it in little acts of kindness in our daily routine and in the most hidden moments of our day.”

These little pearls of wisdom are good for all of us to hear. Pope Francis is also concerned for our young people. How many young people to find themselves disillusioned by poverty, drug addiction, violence, unemployment and bleak prospects for their future! How many young people simply want someone to listen and to take their concerns seriously! In addition to holding a Synod in October on Young People, the Holy Father traveled in January to Panamá, which he called a “land of dreams” and reminded us that young people expect us to “live in simplicity, transparency, with a clear sense of responsibility for others and our world.” He continued that young people urge us to do

our part in building a better world so that “their dreams do not remain ephemeral or ethereal,” concluding with a reminder that “the right to the future is a human right as well.”

Often serving as a conscience for nations, Pope Francis believes that this better future also involves having a sense of fraternity and communion, even with those who hold different religious beliefs. In his recent visit to the United Arab Emirates, he and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar signed a joint declaration which “invites all persons who have faith in God and faith in *human fraternity* to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect and awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters.”

Wherever he goes, Pope Francis tries to promote peace, mutual respect and dialogue – to build bridges between peoples and nations, without excluding the poor or the foreigner; to promote respect for the dignity of the person and the gift of life; and to invite us to join in this mission. Grateful that the Lord called the Holy Father to this office six years ago, I invite you to join me in giving thanks to God for this Pope. Because of him our world is a better place now, and through his words, gestures, and presence, our young people, families, and the “least of our brothers and sisters” have hope for a better future. Let us give thanks then and rejoice – We have a Pope!