

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

As the Apostolic Nuncio, I want to welcome you to this “house of the Pope”, where Pope Francis stayed during his visit to the United States in 2015, but also where his predecessors, Benedict XVI and John Paul II, stayed. This evening we celebrate the fifth anniversary of the election of Pope Francis.

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

To all men and women of good will who have joined us this evening, I welcome you. Your presence here is a recognition of the important role the Holy Father plays as a force for peace and goodness in our world. I am also happy to greet the many representatives of the government from the judicial, legislative and executive branches, members of the Congress and Senate, members of the Department of State, including the Chief of Protocol, Sean Lawler, and members of the Cabinet, including the Secretary of Labor, Alexander Acosta. Finally, I want to welcome my colleagues, my fellow ambassadors, representing their nations.

Your presence in the “house of the Pope” shows your desire to work with the Church in promoting the common good and those values which help build a more just and well-ordered society, one which allows for an exchange of ideas, which respects differences, and which recognizes the positive contributions that Catholics and persons of faith can make in public life.

Five years ago, Pope Francis appeared on the balcony above Saint Peter’s Square. From that first moment, he has fascinated the world, attracting people by his gestures, his words, and his presence. What have those five years meant to us? Why the universal attraction?

Catholics and believers are captivated by Pope Francis’s call to live the Gospel more authentically and to announce the person of Jesus Christ joyfully. He invites the Church to be a missionary Church, characterized by reaching out to others in the name of the Gospel. His humble, pastoral style does not mean that the message of the Gospel has changed; rather, His Holiness directs us to bring the joyful message to the people. He helps the Church understand herself as a field hospital, where those wounded by sin and other forms of human alienation can experience the tenderness of God’s mercy. After all, God sent his Son into the world to save not the righteous but sinners.

What have these five years meant for humanity? It is amazing to see how people from all walks of life, even non-Catholics and non-Christians, want to see the Pope and to listen to his voice, especially in challenging situations and crises. As a global figure with moral authority, he has drawn the world’s attention to the crisis of migrants and to those troubled areas of our world like Syria, Sudan, or the Congo. Recall his constant invitations to join in prayer to avert violence and to promote peace. There are countless examples which could be given from these past five years. Wherever he visits, he goes as an ambassador of peace.

Consider his visit to Washington a few years ago and how this city was different when the Pope was present. His words at the White House and at the Capitol helped many realize that the Pope shares in the hopes and dreams of the American people and that he greatly desires an ongoing culture of dialogue and encounter in which future generations can fulfill their hopes and dreams – a culture built by witnesses like President Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day and Thomas Merton. Even the first foreign trip of President Trump included a visit to the Holy Father, a recognition of the tremendous responsibility that both the Holy See and the United States play in assuring peace and the common good.

On this, the fifth anniversary of his election as Pope, I invite you to join me in giving thanks to God for this Pope. Through his words, his gestures, and his presence, our world is a better place. His emphasis on mercy and the tenderness of God is not only an invitation to be patient with ourselves and others, but also to have the courage to begin again on the road that leads to peace, freedom and joy. Let us give thanks and rejoice – We have a Pope!