



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO A DELEGATION OF BUSINESS AND CIVIC LEADERS
FROM THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND (U.S.A.)**

Monday, 1st July 1996

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome your delegation of business and civic leaders from the State of Rhode Island on the occasion of your visit to Rome. As you and your fellowcitizens prepare to celebrate America's Independence Day, I offer cordial good wishes that your country will be strengthened in its commitment to the democratic ideals so nobly expressed in its founding documents.

For many generations the United States has been an inspiration to younger nations as they strive to build harmonious societies on the solid principles of democratic values. The aspirations of individuals and peoples throughout the world have been greatly influenced by America's historic commitment to liberty and self determination, equality under law, respect for human rights, including the free exercise of religion. These principles, for which young Americans even in recent days have given their lives, represent a precious heritage which each generation is called to appropriate and pass on. Indeed, "the value of democracy stands or falls with the values which it embodies and promotes" (Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Evangeliium Vitae*, 70). Authentic freedom has its necessary foundation in the truth about the human person; it is precisely in the search for truth that we become free (Cfr. *Io.* 8, 32). When the demands of truth are ignored or repressed, the pursuit of freedom can easily become a mere pretext for license, a new form of tyranny, the first victims of which are always the weak, the defenceless, those who have no voice.

Dear friends, I pray that your efforts to serve society will always be guided by Almighty God, the Creator of the human family and the ultimate source of all justice, truth and peace. Upon you and your families I cordially invoke his abundant blessings.

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