

FAREWELL CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*John Fitzgerald Kennedy International Airport, New York
Sunday, 20 April 2008*

*Mr. Vice-President,
Distinguished Civil Authorities,
My Brother Bishops,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

The time has come for me to bid farewell to your country. These days that I have spent in the United States have been blessed with many memorable experiences of American hospitality, and I wish to express my deep appreciation to all of you for your kind welcome. It has been a joy for me to witness the faith and devotion of the Catholic community here. It was heart-warming to spend time with leaders and representatives of other Christian communities and other religions, and I renew my assurances of respect and esteem to all of you. I am grateful to President Bush for kindly coming to greet me at the start of my visit, and I thank Vice-President Cheney for his presence here as I depart. The civic authorities, workers and volunteers in Washington and New York have given generously of their time and resources in order to ensure the smooth progress of my visit at every stage, and for this I express my profound thanks and appreciation to Mayor Adrian Fenty of Washington and Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York.

Once again I offer prayerful good wishes to the representatives of the see of Baltimore, the first Archdiocese, and those of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Louisville, in this jubilee year. May the Lord continue to bless you in the years ahead. To all my Brother Bishops, to Bishop DiMarzio of this Diocese of Brooklyn, and to the officers and staff of the Episcopal Conference who have contributed in so many ways to the preparation of this visit, I extend my renewed gratitude for their hard work and dedication. With great affection I greet once more the priests and religious, the deacons, the seminarians and young people, and all the faithful in the United States, and I encourage you to continue bearing joyful witness to Christ our Hope, our Risen Lord and Savior, who makes all things new and gives us life in abundance.

One of the high-points of my visit was the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations, and I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his kind invitation and welcome. Looking back over the sixty years that have passed since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I give thanks for all that the Organization has been able to achieve in defending and promoting the fundamental rights of every man, woman and child throughout the world, and I encourage people of good will everywhere to continue working tirelessly to promote justice and peaceful co-existence between peoples and nations.

My visit this morning to Ground Zero will remain firmly etched in my memory, as I continue to pray for those who died and for all who suffer in consequence of the tragedy that occurred there in 2001. For all the people of America, and indeed throughout the world, I pray that the future will bring increased fraternity and solidarity, a growth in mutual respect, and a renewed trust and confidence in God, our heavenly Father.

With these words, I take my leave, I ask you to remember me in your prayers, and I assure you of my affection and friendship in the Lord. May God bless America!

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