

THE ALLURE OF GOODNESS AND LOVE

The Allure of Goodness and Love

Pope Francis in the United States

Complete Texts



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Contents

Washington, DC September 23–24, 2015

- 1 Welcoming Ceremony 3
South Lawn of the White House
- 2 Meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America 6
Cathedral of Saint Matthew
- 3 Holy Mass and Canonization of Blessed Fr. Junípero Serra 16
National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception
- 4 Visit to the Joint Session of the United States Congress 20
United States Capitol
- 5 Visit to the Charitable Center of St. Patrick Parish and
Meeting with the Homeless 30
St. Patrick in the City

New York City September 24–25, 2015

- 6 Vespers with Priests and Religious 37
St. Patrick's Cathedral
- 7 Meeting with the Personnel of the United Nations 41
United Nations Headquarters
- 8 Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly
of the United Nations Organization 43
United Nations Headquarters
- 9 Interreligious Meeting 54
Ground Zero Memorial

vi *The Allure of Goodness and Love*

10 Prayer of Remembrance of His Holiness Pope Francis 57
Ground Zero Memorial

11 Meeting with Children and Immigrant Families 60
Our Lady, Queen of Angels School

12 Holy Mass 63
Madison Square Garden

Philadelphia
September 26–27, 2015

13 Holy Mass with Bishops, Clergy and Religious
of Pennsylvania 69
Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul

14 Meeting for Religious Liberty with the Hispanic Community
and Other Immigrants 72
Independence Mall

15 Prayer Vigil for the Festival of Families 77
Benjamin Franklin Parkway

16 Meeting with Victims of Sexual Abuse 84
St. Charles Borromeo Seminary

17 Meeting with Bishops Taking Part in the World Meeting
of Families 86
St. Charles Borromeo Seminary

18 Visit to Detainees 93
Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility

19 Closing Mass of the Eighth World Meeting of Families 96
Benjamin Franklin Parkway

Postscript
September 27, 2015

20 In-Flight Press Conference 103
Papal Flight

WASHINGTON, DC



SEPTEMBER 23–24, 2015



Welcoming Ceremony

Address of the Holy Father

*South Lawn of the White House, Washington, DC
Wednesday, September 23, 2015*

Good morning!

Mr. President,

I am deeply grateful for your welcome in the name of all Americans. As the son of an immigrant family, I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families. I look forward to these days of encounter and dialogue, in which I hope to listen to, and share, many of the hopes and dreams of the American people.

During my visit I will have the honor of addressing Congress, where I hope, as a brother of this country, to offer words of encouragement to those called to guide the nation's political future in fidelity to its founding principles. I will also travel to Philadelphia for the Eighth World Meeting of Families, to celebrate and support the institutions of marriage and the family at this, a critical moment in the history of our civilization.

Mr. President, together with their fellow citizens, American Catholics are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive, to safeguarding the rights of individuals and

communities, and to rejecting every form of unjust discrimination. With countless other people of goodwill, they are likewise concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect their deepest concerns and their right to religious liberty. That freedom remains one of America's most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.

Mr. President, I find it encouraging that you are proposing an initiative for reducing air pollution. Accepting the urgency, it seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem which can no longer be left to a future generation. When it comes to the care of our "common home," we are living at a critical moment of history. We still have time to make the changes needed to bring about "a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change" (*Laudato Si* 13). Such change demands on our part a serious and responsible recognition not only of the kind of world we may be leaving to our children, but also to the millions of people living under a system which has overlooked them. Our common home has been part of this group of the excluded which cries out to heaven and which today powerfully strikes our homes, our cities and our societies. To use a telling phrase of the Reverend Martin Luther King, we can say that we have defaulted on a promissory note and now is the time to honor it.

We know by faith that "the Creator does not abandon us; he never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home" (*Laudato Si* 13). As Christians inspired by this certainty, we wish to commit ourselves to the conscious and responsible care of our common home.

Mr. President, the efforts which were recently made to mend broken relationships and to open new doors to cooperation within our human family represent positive steps along the path of reconciliation, justice and freedom. I would like all men and women of goodwill in this great nation to support the efforts of the inter-

national community to protect the vulnerable in our world and to stimulate integral and inclusive models of development, so that our brothers and sisters everywhere may know the blessings of peace and prosperity which God wills for all his children.

Mr. President, once again I thank you for your welcome, and I look forward to these days in your country. God bless America!