

JMJ

*John Carroll:  
Right from the Start*

AMDG

No speaker is happy when someone else steals his lines. But, last Wednesday, another speaker did pre-empt me, as he commented, "As this year marks the bicentenary of the elevation of the founding see of Baltimore to an archdiocese, it gives me an opportunity to recall with admiration and gratitude the life and ministry of John Carroll, the first bishop of Baltimore -- a worthy leader of the Catholic Community in your newly independent nation. His tireless efforts to spread the gospel in the vast territory under his care laid the foundation for the ecclesial life of your country and enabled the Church in America to grow to maturity."

However, since those words came from none other than Pope Benedict XVI, I guess I can forgive him, and actually thank him for giving me a great opening line.

For a student of the history of the Catholic Church in the United States to lecture on John Carroll is a thrill, analogous to an American historian speaking about George Washington. To do so in this splendidly restored basilica, the completion of which was a dream of his, and where his body was moved in 1834, adds luster to an already memorable moment, similar to an American historian lecturing on Washington at Mt. Vernon. To do so in the gracious presence of successors of John Carroll, two men whom I deeply admire and am honored to call friends, Cardinal William Keeler and Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, leaves me immensely grateful.

Faithful members of this premier see of Baltimore, congratulations on the bicentennial of the archdiocese! Thank you for the leadership and example you have given all of us, your descendants, since 1789!

Archbishop O'Brien, *auguri* on the upcoming reception of the *Pallium*, the festive event which gives rise to this lecture series which I am delighted to inaugurate.

*John Carroll*: at his core a deeply committed Catholic, a faithful, pastorally zealous pastor, a quintessential Marylander, a patriotic American citizen. As James Hennesy, S.J., commented, "It is impossible to understand the particular genius of Catholicism in America without understanding the particular genius of John Carroll, its first bishop."

So let's give it a try . . .

*John Carroll* . . . born in 1735 in upper Marlborough, Maryland, the third of seven children of Daniel and Eleanor Carroll. On his father's side he was of Irish ancestry, but from his mother's family, the Darnalls, he could trace his lineage back to the brother-in-law of Lord Baltimore, thus making him a Catholic version of a "blueblood." His cousin, Charles Carroll of Carrolton, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, the last one to die; and John's brother, Daniel, was a signer of the Federal Constitution. If he were alive today, John Carroll would have every right in the world to wear an American flag on his lapel.

You realize, of course, that Catholics in the thirteen colonies were a tiny, somewhat hidden, terribly misunderstood, and legally proscribed religion, less than 1% of the population -- perhaps around 24, 000 -- on the eve of the revolution. As John Adams observed, with unapologetic relief, Catholics in his hometown of Braintree, Massachusetts, were "as rare as a comet on an earthquake." The few there were could be found in Pennsylvania, New York, but predominantly in Maryland.

This daring experiment called Maryland began so nobly in 1634 with the arrival of the *Ark* and the *Dove*, as a haven of religious freedom. No, Maryland was not founded as a Catholic colony, and, no, Maryland was not named after Our Lady, but after Henrietta Maria, queen of Charles I. However, Maryland was unique in its climate of religious freedom, legislated by the *Toleration Acts* of 1639 and 1649, guaranteeing religious liberty and separation of Church and State, an insistence toasted by Catholics but resented by Anglicans and especially Puritans. Unfortunately, this welcome fresh air was later polluted after the so-called "Glorious" Revolution of 1688, which resulted in the legal establishment of the Church of England in Maryland.

In spite of this, Catholics flourished in this colony. A *modus vivendi* developed where Catholics, *de jure* proscribed, were *de facto* tolerated. Catholic religious practice, to be sure, was quiet, private, modeled somewhat on the "Recusant Catholicism" of the mother country, with an occasional unfortunate insistence that one's Catholic faith was intensely private, not to be worn on one's sleeve. Maryland Catholics stressed intense personal piety, the obligation to raise the children in the faith of their fathers, a love of

the sacraments, a thick communal cohesion, and a disapproval of marrying a non-Catholic.

The main reason Catholics in your colony were tolerated was because they were rich, such that, by the Revolution, the Carroll family was probably the wealthiest in the thirteen colonies.

It was into this culture that "Jackie Carroll" arrived in 1735.

Here's what I'm going to do: first, I'll sketch our first bishop's biography. Then, I want to breeze through what I consider his priorities, which we savor as his legacy to this day.

Education, as I have mentioned, was emphasized by the Catholic colonists of Maryland. "Jackie" was homeschooled by his mother at first, and then sent to a *sub rosa* Catholic school at Bohemia Manor in Northeastern Maryland, conducted by Father Thomas Poulton, a Jesuit.

In 1748, as was custom among the Catholic gentry of Maryland, young John, in company with his cousin, Charles, the future signer -- who already called John a "scholar" -- was sent to St. Omer, a school run by English Jesuits in Flanders.

To hardly anyone's surprise, there Jack decided to enter the Jesuit novitiate. You see, the only priests he ever knew were members of the Society of Jesus. They

had been part of Maryland's history from day one. Two of them, Andrew White and John Altham, had actually arrived on the *Ark* and the *Dove*, and, more or less, the Jesuits were the only clergy in the colonies, counting twenty-two at independence. Jack admired their devotion, rigor, zeal, and scholarship, and was proud to be professed in 1771, ordained probably two-years prior.

His loyalty to the Society of Jesus explains his deep sadness when Pope Clement XIV, buckling under the pressure from paranoid European monarchs who resented the prestige of an order subject only to the Pope and not under their thumb, dissolved the Jesuits in 1773. This left Father Carroll upset with the papacy, especially against the section of the Roman Curia called the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, called by everybody *Propaganda*, which most Jesuits blamed for the suppression. This will help explain some of John Carroll's mild Gallicanism which will surface later.

So, in 1774, Father Jack went home to Rock Creek, Maryland, and began years of very generous priestly ministry -- Mass, confession, visiting the sick, marriages, catechesis, preaching -- travelling throughout Maryland and Northern Virginia.

In 1776, the Continental Congress asked him to accompany cousin Charles and no less dignitaries than Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Chase as part of a diplomatic journey to Canada in an attempt to convince French Catholic Canadians to support the American Revolution, a mission that flopped due to the resistance of Bishop Joseph Briand.

Known as an outstanding priest, a member of a prominent family, and an ardent proponent of the cause of independence, John Carroll became the best-known priest in the newly freed colonies, so it was to no one's surprise when, in 1784, he was appointed "Superior of the American Mission" by the Holy See. When it came to the nomination of our first bishop, he seemed the shoo-in, and was named such in 1789, in the bull establishing the premier diocese, by, *Ex Hac Apostolicae*.

In this apostolic office he labored prodigiously for a quarter century, until his death in 1815. As Annabelle Melville concludes, "In these difficult years he measured each issue by the ultimate and common good not only of the Church but also of the nation. He lived to see independence declared, won, and again preserved in the War of 1812; the Catholic population quadrupled, and the clergy doubled, with his beloved Baltimore an archdiocese, and four new dioceses -- Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown -- under him." His zeal was concentrated on three areas: the establishment of an ecclesiastical structure, promotion of Catholic education, and engineering a confident, at-home, respected Catholicism in a republic so novel and suspicious to a Eurocentered Roman Church.

And it is a consideration of each of these that will bring us to the bottom-of-the-ninth.

First, John Carroll was single-minded in establishing the structure of the Catholic Church in the United States.

In his still magisterial biography of our proto-bishop, Peter Guilday paints a stark portrait of the utter lack of institutional Catholic presence in the new Republic John Carroll served as priest, superior, bishop, and archbishop. Just consider the following problems:

-- Who was actually "in charge" of the Church in this new country, anyway? This was actually a pressing question even before the revolution. Usually, colonies would look to the mother country to provide canonical government. This didn't help us, though, since England, under the Penal Laws, lacked regular Church structure, too.

-- there were only about 24, 000 Catholics in the former thirteen colonies. Mostly scattered and unlettered. Technically, there were no canonical parishes, either, since there were no bishops.

-- and the twenty-two known priests? Well, they were Jesuits, and, as I mentioned earlier, this was no help, since the Society of Jesus was squashed in 1773.

-- Well, couldn't the Holy See do something? Foiled again! The distance from Rome, the primitive communications, Rome's total ignorance of the American scene, and the papacy's own fight for survival after the French Revolution, resulting, recall, in Pius VII's imprisonment by Napoleon, meant that Rome had bigger fish to fry than Baltimore soft shell crabs.

In other words, no bishop, no authority, no canonical parishes, no schools or programs of catechesis, an irregular sacramental life, drifting clergy, no religious women or men, no hospitals or organized charitable outreach, no bingo or fish fires, -- the Catholic Church in the United States was a barren desert.

Into this wasteland steps John Carroll. As Annabelle Melville observes, "Carroll possessed a genius for organization. To him are due the formulation of the principles and the foundations that made possible the later expansion and status of the Church in the U.S."

How did he accomplish this? Let me count the ways:

-- eager to organize the clergy, in 1782 he devised a plan, formulated two years later, called "Form of Government, Rules for the Select Body of the Clergy," a basic system, drawn up at Whitemarsh, to provide order, structure, a policy for assignments, protection of Church property, and clerical discipline.

-- In 1784, as we have seen, he was appointed "Superior of the American Mission" by the Apostolic See, a post he reluctantly accepted.

-- from this post he energetically visited Catholic homes and small communities, celebrated the sacraments in the scattered churches, tried to enforce some discipline among the clergy, and, in general, "flew the flag," letting people know

that there was a Catholic presence in the newly independent colonies, however fragile and unorganized it might be.

-- from this post, in 1785, he wrote "A *Relatio* of the State of Religion" which he sent to Cardinal Lorenzo Antonelli, prefect of *Propaganda*, detailing the number of the flock, a census of the clergy, the lack of priests and the arrival of some real clerical lemons from abroad, the danger of moral laxity tempting Catholics, the unacceptable absence of Catholic education, and the hostility of the Protestant culture.

-- while in that *relatio* he advised Rome that a bishop was not yet needed, he soon changed his mind, due to the crisis of trusteeism which we will touch upon in a moment, and, so, in 1788, an official letter from the American clergy was sent to Rome asking for a bishop, and seeking as well the right of the American clergy to elect their own. Rome conceded; the American priests elected John Carroll, with only one abstention -- we can guess who that was -- and our man was appointed bishop of Baltimore in 1789.

-- no sooner was he home from England, where he had been consecrated a bishop at the Weld Estate in Dorset on the Feast of the Assumption, 1790, than he summoned a synod of the clergy, thus signaling a preference for a collegial, collaborative, somewhat democratic style. Topics such as sacramental uniformity, the importance of Sunday Mass, the call for lifelong, faithful marriage, the necessity of sound catechesis, a call to support the Church

financially, and the threats of religious indifferentism, moral laxity, and cultural antipathy -- these themes sound familiar? -- were all discussed at length, and a pastoral letter was published summarizing their resolutions. Not wanting the Church to be without a bishop again, should he die, the savvy Carroll also began discussions about his successor, having received from *Propaganda* once again the *placet* to poll his priests as to their choice of a coadjutor. He thus sent to Rome in May, 1793, the name of Father Lawrence Graessl, a Jesuit serving in Pennsylvania. Sadly, in October of that year, Graessl, the choice of Bishop Carroll and the priests, died of yellow fever contracted while ministering to the victims. There was, of course, no quick way to inform the Holy See of this fact, so, sure enough, the dead man was appointed coadjutor to Carroll in December, 1793. Rome did not learn of this until six months later, so the process had to begin all over again. Not until 1800 did the mandate appointing Leonard Neale as his coadjutor reach Carroll! Eight years from start-to-finish to appoint a bishop!

-- and, in a move we are celebrating this year, Carroll and his priests already began discussions of even more dioceses, a proposal that would not bear fruit until 1808 when Baltimore became our first archdiocese, with Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Bardstown the four new suffagan sees. At this point, of course, our hero became a metropolitan archbishop, and his Pallium was brought to him by the English minister, Augustus Fortes. After he consecrated the three of the four new bishops in 1810, he presided over yet another synod, constituting the earliest codification of ecclesiastical law for the Church in

America. In 1811, he believed Louisiana and Florida should be a new diocese, and nominated to Rome the Sulpician Louis Dubourg, who went to New Orleans as the new bishop.

You get my point: when he died in 1815, he left a Church structured, organized, regularized, respected, visible, and ready to expand.

I ask you to consider the chilling alternative to John Carroll's energetic and effective emphasis on structure: had he not stepped into the wasteland, either the microscopic Catholic Church would have languished, with members leaving, clergy adrift, souls lost to the faith, and the Church never quite "making it" in the new country, or, Rome would have appointed a foreign superior -- as they indeed tried to do, as we'll see in a minute -- thus making the Catholic Church in America seem more an outsider than ever.

We must mention the major obstacle to John Carroll's laudable efforts to organize; indeed, his "thorn in the flesh," *lay trusteeism*.

Simply put, *lay trusteeism* is the claim by lay officials in a parish that they have the right to appoint and fire their pastors.

As Thomas Shelly reminds us, John Carroll was neither a clerical autocrat nor an ecclesiastical democrat. He was more than willing to allow lay leaders administrative prerogatives in finance, property, and some pastoral sway, recognizing that the shortage

of clergy and the American preference for democratic polity made such collaboration with the laity laudable.

But he drew the line at the right of the laity to have a say in doctrinal or moral matters, or, to the point, in the hiring and firing of pastors. Even in the latter, he was willing to consult the lay parochial leaders, as long as they granted the bishop the final authority to appoint.

Notorious cases of lay trusteeism are well-documented at, for instance, St. Peter's Church in New York, where the parishioners ousted the priest Carroll had appointed, Charles Whelan, and hired a charming Irishman, Andrew Nugent, who, unknown to the parishioners, had earlier been suspended by the Archbishop of Dublin for disobedience and immorality. When Father Carroll tried to visit this Church in 1787, he was literally not allowed in the door, the episode, by the way, that convinced him and his brother priests that it was time for a bishop with the authority to settle trusteeism.

Another case, at St. Mary's, Philadelphia, led to the trustee-appointed pastor, William Hogan, leading a mob to keep the bishop out of his cathedral, and calling for the establishment of an "independent American Catholic Church."

Lay trusteeism was aided and abetted by an American culture that preferred a congregational polity; ethnic complications, with different language groups wanting and finding their own priest; and the abundance of unscrupulous priests in America,

downright scoundrels who came from Europe, could charm the trustees, claim a pastorate, and take over.

Lay trusteeism was probably the most severe crisis in American Catholic history until the clergy sexual abuse scandal. It literally drove John Carroll to the point of exhaustion and frustration, and hounded the Church until the 1840's.

The second priority of our first bishop was the encouragement of Catholic education. Himself a man of culture and refinement, he believed that society was at its best when it took the education of its children and youth with the utmost seriousness, and that the Church was at its best when it was an ally in this effort.

Under his auspices, as Brother Thomas Spalding documents, Catholic colleges for men were set up at Georgetown, St. Mary's in Baltimore, and at Mt. St. Mary's, Emmitsburg. Academies for girls were established at Visitation in Georgetown, St. Joseph's at Emmitsburg, and Nazareth in Bardstown, Kentucky.

To staff these endeavors, our first bishop welcomed and encouraged religious women and men, as the Sisters of Loretto, and the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, both in Kentucky, and the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph, founded by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, all enjoyed his enthusiastic patronage. Among the men, he encouraged Augustinians, Dominicans, the restored Society of Jesus a few months before he died, and his beloved Sulpicians, exiles from the French Revolution whom he met in London while in England in 1790 for his episcopal consecration. These original four accepted his

plea to come to Baltimore, where they opened St. Mary's Seminary in 1791, dedicated to Carroll's dream to form a native clergy in the United States, instead of depending upon international priests. Beginning with Stephen Badin, whom Carroll ordained in 1793, thirty priests had come from our premier seminary by the time he died in 1815.

By the way, for the sake of completion, Carroll welcomed not only teaching sisters but cloistered ones, as we think of the Carmelites of Port Tobacco, established in 1790.

That the Catholic educational system in the United States is admired by the world, the largest private school system on the planet, is in no small measure due to John Carroll, who made Catholic education a major plank on his pastoral platform.

Finally, our first bishop's third priority was to make the Catholic Church "at home" in America.

You know how tough that was. Here, in America, it is not an exaggeration to say that the vast majority of citizens were suspicious of Catholics at best, hostile to them at worst. As George Weigel has remarked, "The classic story line of American Catholicism is a story written under the long shadow of nativist (largely Protestant) anti-Romanism" and its recurring charge that Catholicism -- as a body of doctrine, a matter of personal conviction, and an institution -- was simply incompatible with American democratic republicanism." John Tracy Ellis would frequently repeat the remark Arthur

Schlesinger Sr. made to him that "prejudice against your Church is the deepest bias in the history of the American people."

Yes, anti-Catholicism is part of America's DNA, and John Carroll knew he had his work cut out for him if he were to make Catholicism "at home" in a culture that viewed the Church as foreign, superstitious, unbiblical, run by a worldly Italian potentate, priest-ridden, the worst of the European tyranny and oppression pure-blooded Americans detested.

Not only did America not understand Catholicism, but Rome could hardly comprehend this upstart new republic. Democracy? A revolution against a sovereign monarch? Freedom of the press? Religious liberty? No unity between Church and State?

Strange, novel, dangerous ideas! This will not work! This is bad for the Church! What in the world is going on over there? And we don't even know who to ask! And we don't even know how to get in touch with them!

Think of Rome's consternation, for instance, when, in 1783, it directed its nuncio in France, Archbishop Doria Pamphili to confer with the American commissioner in Paris, one Benjamin Franklin, as to whether or not the new congress in America would be open to the appointment of a bishop to shepherd the infant Catholic Church there, only to hear from Franklin that the nomination of bishops was of absolutely no concern at all to congress!

Can you imagine the shock in the Eternal City? Here was the government of a new nation saying that it was none of their business how or by whom the Church was to be led! And this at a time when rulers in Europe jealously guarded their prerogatives to propose bishops, nominate cardinals, censor papal documents, sway Papal conclaves, suppress religious orders, and even, in the case of the so called "sacristan emperor" of the Austrian Hungarian Empire, decide how many candles should be lit for a high Mass!

America did not understand Catholics; the Church universal certainly did not understand America!

Yet John Carroll was not deterred. He was convinced that his tiny flock, misunderstood by Rome and its new country, could be right-at-home in this daring, exciting new adventure called the United States of America.

One of the most compelling proofs that Catholicism could be acceptable in America was the very person of John Carroll himself. That such an intelligent, articulate, wealthy, broad-minded, unapologetically patriotic, quintessentially American gentleman could at the same time be a proud, convinced, ardent Catholic, went a long way in convincing the new republic's movers and shakers that America and the Catholic Church were indeed compatible.

So, for instance, in 1784, when an ex-priest Charles Wharton -- recall the observation of John Tracy Ellis that, from the start, the worst of the anti-Catholics can

be ex-priests, former seminarians, or so-called "escaped nuns" -- charged in a widely published article that Catholics were dangerous to the new country and could never be reliably loyal American citizens, it was Father Carroll who brilliantly countered in his *Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America*, claiming: "Freedom and independence acquired by the united efforts, and cemented with the mingled blood of Protestant and Catholic fellow-citizens, should be equally enjoyed by all."

Under the pen name *Pacificus* he would, in 1789, once again defend religious freedom for all, and, in the same year, would compose an eloquent "Address of the Roman Catholics" to President Washington, not only congratulating him on his office, but reasserting that Catholics had a well-founded title to equal rights in return for their service in the nation's cause and commonweal.

Carroll, then, wanted his infant flock to be visible, respected, a participant in this daring political project. A bishop who wanted his flock to be hidden and quiet, and his Church to attract no attention, would hardly have commissioned Benjamin Latrobe as architect of his cathedral!

He knew that some Catholic cosmetic features might have to be refined to make the Church a bit more acceptable at home. We have seen, for instance, how he pleaded with Rome to allow the election of America's first bishops, an example of democracy to counter the caricature that the Catholic Church was autocratic. Then again, remember how he welcomed the Sulpicians to set-up his own seminary, allowing the Church in the

United States to form its own priests, instead of relying on international ones, thus dulling the charge that Catholics were foreigners.

Yes, he was open to assertive lay leadership, inviting trustees to run the temporalities of their parishes, and actually to be consulted about clerical assignments, as long as they stopped at interfering in faith, morals, and the actual appointment of clergy, an openness pleasing to the more congregationally inclined polity of America.

Yes, he wanted collaboration with his clergy, as seen in the Synod of 1791, and the collegial meetings with his new suffragans in 1810, thus settling the precedent for what James Hennessy calls "the proudest collegial heritage of any hierarchy in the world," which developed into the seven provincial and three plenary councils of Baltimore, held in this very basilica, and, a case can be made, eventually morphing into the current United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Yes, he even pushed gently for such reforms as vernacular in the liturgy, and was less-than-enthusiastic about the wisdom of the Papal States, which he believed risked reducing the Pope to just an Italian prince. All of these were his efforts to show a suspicious American culture that this Catholic Church could comfortably be at-home in a non-European, non-privileged setting.

It was in his dealings with and outlook towards the Holy See that John Carroll was most deft and shrewd.

Let it be said right-off-the-bat that our first bishop was impeccably loyal to the See of Peter, sincerely convinced that unity with the Successor of the Fisherman was essential for the integrity of the Catholic faith.

However, he did ask Rome to, shall we say, "cut-him-some-slack," lest the Holy See's authority over the baby-Church might unintentionally provide gunpowder to the legion of anti-Catholics who believed Catholics could not be reliable citizens because they were subjects of a foreign potentate.

This must be stated, because, today there are those who claim that John Carroll was an ardent Gallican who despised Rome and did everything he could to create an "American Church" that was distant not only geographically but doctrinally from the Holy Father; and those other critics who suggest that he waffled under Roman thumbscrews, thus thwarting the chance to develop a distinctively "American" -- not "Roman" -- Catholicism.

Baloney!

He had love and loyalty to Rome, and knew that unity with the Successor of Peter was a birthright of every Catholic; yet he also realized that, on non-essentials, Rome would have to be very patient with the United States. And he was far from a sycophant in his dealings with the Holy See, never afraid of telling them that they needed occasionally to "think again" when it came to this fragile new flock in this bold new political climate. While ardently loyal to the Bishop of Rome, he did make a

distinction between what he called the Pope's "supernatural" authority -- which meant faith and morals -- and dominion over the political sphere. Still simmering over the suppression of the Jesuits by the pontiff whose family name was Ganganelli, he would caution his good friend Father Charles Plowden about an excessive defense of the papacy: "Remember the iniquities and oppression of popes such as Ganganelli, and you will be careful to obey and respect their orders within the line of their rightful jurisdiction, but not to extend it further, which sooner or later always does harm." John Carroll would have probably agreed with the Irish liberator, Daniel O'Connell, who later proclaimed, "I take my religion from Rome, but my politics from home."

What John Carroll most insisted upon was that Rome consider the Catholic Church in the United States *not* as a mission, but as a genuine *Church*, with regular canonical organization from *home*, not from a foreign country. Thus he bristled that the Church in the U.S. was under *Propaganda Fide*, meaning that the Holy See considered them as missions, not as a regular Church; thus he nearly had a conniption fit when learning of Rome's well-intentioned but ominous proposition that the Church in the United States be placed under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of a French diocese and bishop; thus did he resist the idea of a "vicar-apostolic" -- that's a "quasi-bishop" with certain faculties from Rome but not considered an "ordinary" in the full-canonical sense, an office Carroll called a "refined Roman political contrivance" -- be named as the authority of the Catholic community in the United States (as four were, by the way, in England.)

No! John Carroll wanted the nascent Church to be as American as apple-pie, as canonically kosher as any Church in any nation in Europe, and as loyal in matters of faith and morals to the See of Peter as any serious Catholic could be.

It was not-to-be a "junior Church," a minor league farm club of the European major leagues, or some cowering, shy observer on the sidelines of American culture and religious life.

And he won. And that, my friends, is a tribute to both the persistence and perceptiveness of John Carroll, and the wisdom and sensitivity of Rome. And we are the beneficiaries.

Let's bring this all home with a final conclusion. I'm out on a limb a bit here, but I am convinced of this proposition: John Carroll was not only convinced that the Apostolic See should grudgingly and patiently tolerate the unique traits of American constitutionalism that codified religious freedom and the separation of Church and State, but he dared believe that the Church Universal would ultimately come to celebrate this daring experiment as most beneficial for the faith.

Thus, the Carroll pedigree would allow one of his successors, James Gibbons, to preach from the pulpit of one of Rome's most venerable Churches, *Santa Maria in Trastevere* -- his titular Church as a cardinal -- over the spot where Peter and Paul most likely celebrated the Eucharist, that . . .

“For myself, as a citizen of the United States, without closing my eyes to our defects as a nation, I proclaim, with a deep sense of pride and gratitude, and in this great capital of Christendom, that I belong to a country where the civil government holds over us the aegis of its protection without interfering in the legitimate exercise of our sublime mission as ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

. . . a stunning ode that would cause *zucchettos* to spin in the Eternal City.

But they would spin no more fourscore years later when another heir of the John Carroll tradition, John Courtney Murray, like our first bishop a Jesuit, who had cut his theological teeth at Woodstock, Maryland, would see his scholarly defense of the American religious experiment enshrined in the Decree on Religious Liberty, *Dignitatis Humanae*, of the Second Vatican Council.

John Carroll would smile to know that today the world’s foremost proponent of religious freedom is the Pope of Rome.

And, just as importantly was the hunch of John Carroll that American culture would eventually regard the Catholic Church in the United States, not as some backward, anachronistic, unenlightened sect to be tolerated as long as it behaves itself and stays out of the public square -- although some elites in academia, entertainment, the media, editorial page writers, and politicians still seem to hold to that -- but would conclude that the Catholic genius of defending God-given inalienable rights, and of

promoting a pursuit of virtue and responsible liberty as the cornerstone of a just political order, was a cherished ingredient in the recipe of the bold American experiment.

Thus would the John Carroll legacy inspire again a James Gibbons who would be right at home defending the right of labor to organize, a Lawrence Sheehan who would courageously stand for civil rights, a William Keeler who would confidently dialogue with other partners in the ecumenical and inter-religious arena, and an Edwin O'Brien who could dare us to crusade for the Culture of Life not only as Catholics but as Americans.

Last Wednesday morning I had an experience that, somewhat to my surprise, left me very moved and inspired.

I was one of 12,000 excited people on the south lawn of the White House, gloating that the crowd was twice that which greeted Queen Elizabeth. Over us loomed the Washington Monument on a magnificent cherry-blossom- D.C. spring morning. I recalled how Pope Pius IX had sent a chunk of prized Italian marble as a gift to be used as one of the blocks to build that tower of honor to the Father of our country, only to have a viciously anti-Catholic mob of Know Nothings sledge-hammer it to pieces, lest this tainted gift from the anti-Christ bastardize this pure American monument to the father of our country.

Now here I was at the White House, festooned with the red, white and blue of Francis Scott Key's Star - Spangled Banner, and the gold and white of the papal crossed keys and tiara. The successor of St. Peter was welcomed with enthusiasm and pomp by the successor of George Washington, who praised the normative and cherished role of the Church in the formation of our country, and a bashful Benedict lauded an America that was a light to the world in so many ways.

As the fife-and-drum brigade marched, as the marines sang the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*, as the President quoted a Roman cardinal named Ratzinger, and as the Pope exclaimed "God bless America," I could not help but think, John Carroll is smiling indeed!