

# Welcome Address for Visit of Pope John Paul II

Most Holy Father,

With joy we welcome you to Baltimore in Maryland.

We welcome you, remembering how you have spoken in Eastern Europe with such persuasive power of the God-given right to religious freedom. We welcome you to Maryland where, before any other place in the English-speaking world, the Catholic-led general assembly legislated in 1639 the Acts of Toleration which opened for a few years the possibility of such freedom on this continent.

Here in Maryland in 1789 your predecessor, Pope Pius VI established the first Catholic diocese in the new United States, with John Carroll as its bishop, giving organization to our family of faith. Here came soon afterward the establishment of our first two seminaries and first Cathedral, all dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Here our bishops met in a series of councils to foster developing communion in the growing Church family in the United States. The last such council gave the Church in this country a catechism, a university, and a deepened commitment to serve and evangelize native and African Americans.

In that tradition the bishops of the United States are here assembled to join in welcoming you, in asking you, as Successor of the Apostle Peter, to strengthen them with your word, and in concelebrating this Eucharist with you.

Baltimore, long a gateway port to America, has taken on a new appearance since you last visited here in 1976. People travel from around the country, indeed from around the world to do business, to undertake advanced research, and to learn new and highly technical skills for public service and development of all kinds. They come for medical treatment, for recreation and they come on pilgrimage—as so many come today.

Holy Father, this city is also part of what you have called the “Fourth World,” where, as in other great cities in our land, many suffer in poverty and loneliness, where

racism and unemployment, drugs and crime take a daily toll on people's energies and hopes. Here, Holy Father, many students and parents, with those who teach in our Catholic schools, face enormous odds, especially economic, as they see in the Catholic schools the very special hope of the young.

Here are our young people, Holy Father, the special pride of our family of faith. So many were in Denver in 1993—so many are here today. They are the Church of tomorrow and of today, ready to renew with all of us our thanks to you for coming.

We greet you on this day when our family of faith thinks of new evangelization. We ask your blessing on the new evangelization of our cities and our land, of our hearts and our hopes. We pray also for the new evangelization of all the world as we look forward to the beginning of the Third Christian Millennium. Mindful of distant places, and the pain and need of many there, we thank God also for the blessing of the Catholic Relief Services, with its world headquarters here in Baltimore. Through this agency of the Catholic Church, we see Jesus acting, Jesus feeding the hungry, and indeed teaching the hungry how to feed themselves, and so extending in this way also his love and his care to the ends of the earth.

Holy Father, we thank you and we salute you as pastor of all the Church. To you we say again, Pope John Paul II, we love you!