



# DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

# NEWS

## OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE, ON KNIGHTS DAY AT THE NATIONAL SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF CZESTOCHOWA, IN DOYLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1969, 2:30 P.M.

I am very happy to be here this afternoon. These ceremonies come as a climax of two of the most exciting weeks I have ever spent.

I returned yesterday afternoon from Europe and my stay there was full of high points -- meeting with transportation officials of three nations -- receiving an award from the President of Italy -- visiting again my parents old home in Pescosansonesco -- and most important of all -- a private audience with His Holiness the Pope.

I visited His Holiness as the personal representative of President Nixon and spent nearly an hour in the Vatican.

I must tell you I was astonished by the wide breadth of interests and knowledge of our Holy Father. We discussed major international issues and problems affecting world peace. On every issue he was completely informed. I told His Holiness that President Nixon had decided to keep open the lines of communication between Washington and the Vatican through frequent visits to Rome of Cabinet officers. Our Holy Father was very pleased with this decision. He indicated that the Vatican, in turn, would be sending envoys to Washington to brief President Nixon.

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But the Pontiff's interests went far beyond matters of state. I found him well aware of the new development in our American technology and science. He discussed the moon landing like a space expert. It was my great privilege to present him a number of photographs of the Apollo 11 flight. Of all of them, he was most delighted with a picture of our good earth taken from the surface of the moon.

I was impressed again during my audience by the tremendous spiritual quality of our great Pontiff. You cannot be with him long without feeling God is close. Frequently, during my visit the words of a special prayer kept coming back to my mind. It's the famous prayer of Thomas A' Kempis. I repeat it now.

"Grant me O Lord to know what I ought to know, to love what I ought to love, to praise what delights Thee most, to value what is precious in Thy sight, to hate what is offensive to Thee.

"Do not suffer me to judge according to the sight of my eyes, not to pass sentence according to the hearing of the ears of ignorant men; but to discern between things visible and spiritual, and above all things always to inquire what is the good pleasure of Thy will."

I sensed while in the presence of our Holy Father that he, too, might have prayed for these ... and I sensed, too, his prayers will be answered.

There is something different about our Columbus Day observance this year -- something absent. We have lost our old and great friend Judge Musmanno. The great jurist was second to no man in his admiration and respect for Columbus. But this was but one of his many interests -- an author, patriot, soldier, a humanitarian -- the list is endless. Of himself, he gave much. For himself, he asked little and his death has left a void. We miss him. May eternal rest be granted unto him.

For me, and many friends of mine who are Knights, Columbus Day is a time of reexamination and reflection. I observe this day by considering again what knighthood in our order means ... particularly, its promises and its responsibilities.

As Knights of Columbus... we are reminded that our links with the past are not to be lightly brushed aside. We are better able to resist the passing fads and fancies of contemporary thought... which too often write off time-honored and traditional truths... solely on grounds that they belong to a supposedly more primitive time.

As Knights we know that knighthood established as an ideal of manly conduct centuries ago in another part of the world, can be a guide and inspiration to the modern American man in meeting challenges of a vastly different kind.

We are still engaged in a crusade. And I suggest we can best honor our crusade by determining that our role shall be that of the Catholic man in action ... our purpose shall be to further the cause of Christ.

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In the church there are many different roles of service, but there is a unity of purpose -- to help men come to God.

We recall the oil of chrism on Holy Thursday. The Bishop, as he consecrates it says, "By this oil you are made prophets and martyrs."

The word "prophet" comes from the Greek word for "preacher."

Having been confirmed with this oil of chrism, our role in the church is to preach Christ by words and more especially by works.

The meaning of the Greek word "martyr" is witness. We witness to Christ by our lives, we do this in all parts of the world, and we do it to the end of our lives and to the laying down of our lives if this need be.

The Vatican Council's decree on the Apostolate of the Laity points out that we laymen must begin assuming our rightful role more fully.

We should do this inside the church, in worship and organizations and Apostolic groups.

And we must do it in the world where we live our daily lives.

The whole spirit of today's world -- involvement, activity -- encourages us to enter more fully into the mission of the church, the salvation of all men.

We expect the Pope and the bishops and priests to fulfill their roles. We must fulfill our role, and this means taking back to some degree, the works that perhaps bishops and priests have been trying to do -- because up to now we could or would not.

How can we be preachers and witnesses of Christ in the world? First, of course, by the holiness of our individual lives.

But we also want to change the world -- to uplift it, to make it better. It is our world, we live in it, we shape it in so many ways, we enjoy its good things.

The Laity decree states that we must "infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws and structures of the community."

And the decree states that only we can do this.

We must work for Christ where we are -- in government, in business, in the professions, in industry, science, research, in the services.

Where we are this moment, we act or we fail. We must not fail.

George Bernard Shaw once wrote, "The greatest crime is not to oppose but to be indifferent to the needs of others; this is the very essence of inhumanity."

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We in government are faced with a floodtide of needs that cry out for solutions -- the problems of the cities, the poor, the untrained displaced by automation, transportation problems, the Negro's struggle for first-class citizenship in fact as well as by law, the expanding needs of education, care of the mentally retarded and exceptional children, ever-widening social services, prevention and control of crime ... air and water pollution problems, traffic safety, displaced slum-dwellers, spiralling hospital costs -- the litany is an almost endless one.

The framework for these problems is not simply political, or economic, or even social.

It is a human framework. These people involved are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of mine. Brothers and sisters of all of us.

The British historian, Arnold Toynbee has said, "The twentieth century will be remembered as the century in which people recognized the needs of their neighbors and did something about them."

Let us make those words true in the Christian way. As Christ put it, "Inasmuch as you did it for one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it for me."

We laymen must be competent in our own field so that we will have the ability to act and to be listened to with respect, so that our words and acts will carry weight.

And we must know how to infuse what we do with the spirit of Christ.

This is a matter of knowing what Christ is and says, of understanding justice and goodness, of applying Christian principles to complex, intricate problems, of studying and consulting to make sure our supplications are valid ones, of pressing on with the right motives in the face of opposition and at the sacrifice of popularity and personal gain.

Where do you live? Where do you work? Where are your interests? Could Christ enter in and recognize it as a place where he is at home?

Shortly after her conversion to Catholicism, Clare Booth Luce spoke to the students of Catholic University in Washington.

She told them simply that their role is to be Christ in the world.

"You must be so much like Christ," she said, "that if a total stranger even so much as comes up to you on the street to ask you the time of day, he will know from the tone of your reply that it is God's high noon."

Ladies and Gentlemen, God's high noon, for each of us, is now. Now is the time to fulfill our role as Christian laymen, men dedicated to infusing Christ into the world where we live and act.

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I know as a public official that this infusion of such a spirit of dedication will mean a better world for all. Let me illustrate.

Two weeks ago we were flying from the United States to Spain. We were flying somewhat parallel to the route taken by Columbus and I was thinking about his voyage -- how he set forth armed with only a theory and courage and faith. He was, in the best sense of the word, the Catholic man in action. And what a triumph was his! What a new era he began!

As we continued across the hundreds of miles of open seas, my thoughts went from Columbus to our newest venture in exploration -- the voyage of Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Mike Collins. And I began to compare. When the great Genovese set forth across the western seas, his mission was to conquer what was then known as the Sea of Darkness. How this name bespeaks of the terror and ignorance of the times! Nearly 500 years later our 3 young American astronauts roared into space on a new voyage of exploration, and their destination was not the Sea of Darkness, but the Sea of Tranquility. And so, my friends, let this be the theme of man -- from darkness to tranquility!

And if this be so, there is no more fitting tribute to that brave Genovese of 477 years ago than the name of the command ship of the historic moon flight -- the space ship "Columbia."

I thank you for this invitation to meet with you today. To worship at this lovely shrine ... to see so many old friends ... to join together, as we are, in a renewal of our knightly vows...all this I shall never forget. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. May God bless you and be with you always.

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