

Joe Samaha, father of Virginia Tech victim Reema Samaha said last week that, "If we do not learn the lesson, we will have lost our students for nothing."

Let's honor the memories of those students and work to be proactive and do anything necessary to make sure that we can deliver fewer and fewer statements commemorating tragedies like Virginia Tech.

This body has the duty to pass laws that protect Americans, and we can do just that, by supporting sensible legislation like the VTV Act to make sure that we do everything we can to avoid more gun violence.

So let's mark today's unfortunate anniversary by upholding the memory of those lost at Virginia Tech last year and promise to do better, work harder, learn the lessons and not let them be lost for nothing.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, yesterday I was away from Washington attending to personal matters and missed several votes. I would have voted "yes" on H.R. 5036, the Emergency Assistance for Secure Elections Act of 2008, "no" on the Motion to Recommit H.R. 5719, "yes" on H.R. 5719, the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act of 2008, and "yes" on H.R. 5517, designating a post office in Humble, Texas.

WELCOMING POPE BENEDICT XVI TO THE UNITED STATES

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, my wife Marie and I were among the thousands who joined President George W. Bush and Laura on the White House lawn today in welcoming Pope Benedict XVI to the United States.

It was among the most inspiring events of my 28 years in Congress.

Both men—extraordinary leaders for extraordinarily difficult times—spoke eloquently of the challenges, opportunities and duties of global citizenship. Both called us to work harder and more effectively for others, especially the disenfranchised, weak and vulnerable.

President Bush—speaking for us—said to the Pope:

"Here in America you'll find a nation of compassion. Americans believe that the measure of a free society is how we treat the weakest and most vulnerable among us. . . . Here in America you'll find a nation that welcomes the role of faith in the public square. . . . Here in America, you'll find a nation that is fully modern, yet guided by ancient and eternal truths. . . . Most of all, Holy Father, you will find in America people whose hearts are open to your message of hope. And America and the world need this message."

Pope Benedict said "I come as a friend. a preacher of the Gospel, and one with great respect for this vast pluralistic society. . . ."

He said he hoped his presence would be "a source of renewal and hope." He reminded us that "Freedom is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility." And the Pope urged us to greater action:

"the need for global solidarity is as urgent as ever, if all people are to live in a way worthy of their dignity—as brothers and sisters dwelling in the same house and around that table which God's bounty has set for all his children. America has traditionally shown herself generous in meeting immediate human needs, fostering development and offering relief to the victims of natural catastrophes. I am confident that this concern for the greater human family will continue to find expression in support for the patient efforts of international diplomacy to resolve conflicts and promote progress. In this way, coming generations will be able to live in a world where truth, freedom and justice can flourish—a world where the God-given dignity and the rights of every man, woman and child are cherished, protected and effectively advanced.

Madam Speaker, what follows are both the President and Pope's remarks in their entirety.

PRESIDENT BUSH WELCOMES HIS HOLINESS

POPE BENEDICT XVI TO WHITE HOUSE

President Bush: Holy Father, Laura and I are privileged to have you here at the White House. We welcome you with the ancient words commended by Saint Augustine: "Pax Tecum." Peace be with you.

You've chosen to visit America on your birthday. Well, birthdays are traditionally spent with close friends, so our entire nation is moved and honored that you've decided to share this special day with us. We wish you much health and happiness—today and for many years to come.

This is your first trip to the United States since you ascended to the Chair of Saint Peter. You will visit two of our greatest cities and meet countless Americans, including many who have traveled from across the country to see you and to share in the joy of this visit. Here in America you'll find a nation of prayer. Each day millions of our citizens approach our Maker on bended knee, seeking His grace and giving thanks for the many blessings He bestows upon us. Millions of Americans have been praying for your visit, and millions look forward to praying with you this week.

Here in America you'll find a nation of compassion. Americans believe that the measure of a free society is how we treat the weakest and most vulnerable among us. So each day citizens across America answer the universal call to feed the hungry and comfort the sick and care for the infirm. Each day across the world the United States is working to eradicate disease, alleviate poverty, promote peace and bring the light of hope to places still mired in the darkness of tyranny and despair.

Here in America you'll find a nation that welcomes the role of faith in the public square. When our Founders declared our nation's independence, they rested their case on an appeal to the "laws of nature, and of nature's God." We believe in religious liberty. We also believe that a love for freedom and a common moral law are written into every human heart, and that these constitute the firm foundation on which any successful free society must be built.

Here in America, you'll find a nation that is fully modern, yet guided by ancient and eternal truths. The United States is the most innovative, creative and dynamic country on earth—it is also among the most religious. In our nation, faith and reason coexist in harmony. This is one of our country's greatest strengths, and one of the reasons that

our land remains a beacon of hope and opportunity for millions across the world.

Most of all, Holy Father, you will find in America people whose hearts are open to your message of hope. And America and the world need this message. In a world where some invoke the name of God to justify acts of terror and murder and hate, we need your message that "God is love." And embracing this love is the surest way to save men from "falling prey to the teaching of fanaticism and terrorism."

In a world where some treat life as something to be debased and discarded, we need your message that all human life is sacred, and that "each of us is willed, each of us is loved" and your message that "each of us is willed, each of us is loved, and each of us is necessary."

In a world where some no longer believe that we can distinguish between simple right and wrong, we need your message to reject this "dictatorship of relativism," and embrace a culture of justice and truth.

In a world where some see freedom as simply the right to do as they wish, we need your message that true liberty requires us to live our freedom not just for ourselves, but "in a spirit of mutual support."

Holy Father, thank you for making this journey to America. Our nation welcomes you. We appreciate the example you set for the world, and we ask that you always keep us in your prayers.

Pope Benedict XVI: Mr. President, thank you for your gracious words of welcome on behalf of the people of the United States of America. I deeply appreciate your invitation to visit this great country. My visit coincides with an important moment in the life of the Catholic community in America: the celebration of the 200th anniversary of elevation of the country's first Diocese—Baltimore—to a metropolitan Archdiocese and the establishment of the Sees of New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Louisville.

Yet I am happy to be here as a guest of all Americans. I come as a friend, a preacher of the Gospel, and one with great respect for this vast pluralistic society. America's Catholics have made, and continue to make, an excellent contribution to the life of their country. As I begin my visit, I trust that my presence will be a source of renewal and hope for the Church in the United States, and strengthen the resolve of Catholics to contribute ever more responsibly to the life of this nation, of which they are proud to be citizens.

From the dawn of the Republic, America's quest for freedom has been guided by the conviction that the principles governing political and social life are intimately linked to a moral order based on the dominion of God the Creator. The framers of this nation's founding documents drew upon this conviction when they proclaimed the self-evident truth that all men are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights grounded in the laws of nature and of nature's God.

The course of American history demonstrates the difficulties, the struggles, and the great intellectual and moral resolve which were demanded to shape a society which faithfully embodied these noble principles. In that process, which forged the soul of the nation, religious beliefs were a constant inspiration and driving force, as for example in the struggle against slavery and in the civil rights movement. In our time, too, particularly in moments of crisis, Americans continue to find their strength in a commitment to this patrimony of shared ideas and aspirations.

In the next few days, I look forward to meeting not only with America's Catholic community, but with other Christian communities and representatives of the many religious traditions present in this country.

Historically, not only Catholics, but all believers have found here the freedom to worship God in accordance with the dictates of their conscience, while at the same time being accepted as part of a commonwealth in which each individual group can make its voice heard.

As the nation faces the increasingly complex political and ethical issues of our time, I am confident that the American people will find in their religious beliefs a precious source of insight and an inspiration to pursue reasoned, responsible and respectful dialogue in the effort to build a more human and free society.

Freedom is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility. Americans know this from experience—almost every town in this country has its monuments honoring those who sacrificed their lives in defense of freedom, both at home and abroad. The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good, and a sense of responsibility towards the less fortunate. It also demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one's deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate.

In a word, freedom is ever new. It is a challenge held out to each generation, and it must constantly be won over for the cause of good. Few have understood this as clearly as the late Pope John Paul II. In reflecting on the spiritual victory of freedom over totalitarianism in his native Poland and in Eastern Europe, he reminded us that history shows time and again that "in a world without truth, freedom loses its foundation," and a democracy without values can lose its very soul. Those prophetic words in some sense echo the conviction of President Washington, expressed in his Farewell Address, that religion and morality represent "indispensable supports" of political prosperity.

The Church, for her part, wishes to contribute to building a world ever more worthy of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God. She is convinced that faith sheds new light on all things, and that the Gospel reveals the noble vocation and sublime destiny of every man and woman. Faith also gives us the strength to respond to our high calling and to hope that inspires us to work for an ever more just and fraternal society. Democracy can only flourish, as your founding fathers realized, when political leaders and those whom they represent are guided by truth and bring the wisdom born of firm moral principle to decisions affecting the life and future of the nation.

For well over a century, the United States of America has played an important role in the international community. On Friday, God willing, I will have the honor of addressing the United Nations organization, where I hope to encourage the efforts underway to make that institution an ever more effective voice for the legitimate aspirations of all the world's peoples.

On this, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the need for global solidarity is as urgent as ever, if all people are to live in a way worthy of their dignity—as brothers and sisters dwelling in the same house and around that table which God's bounty has set for all his children. America has traditionally shown herself generous in meeting immediate human needs, fostering development and offering relief to the victims of natural catastrophes. I am confident that this concern for the greater human family will continue to find expression in support for the patient efforts of international diplomacy to resolve conflicts and promote progress. In this way, coming generations will be able to live in a world where truth, freedom and justice can

flourish—a world where the God-given dignity and the rights of every man, woman and child are cherished, protected and effectively advanced.

Mr. President, dear friends, as I begin my visit to the United States, I express once more my gratitude for your invitation, my joy to be in your midst, and my fervent prayers that Almighty God will confirm this nation and its people in the ways of justice, prosperity and peace. God bless America.

RECOGNIZING NATIONAL PUBLIC SAFETY TELECOMMUNICATIONS WEEK

HON. DAVID G. REICHERT

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. REICHERT. Madam Speaker, April 13–19 is National Public Safety Telecommunications Week—a week dedicated to public-safety telecommunicators who handle millions of calls every year with great efficiency. The selfless nature with which these public servants do their jobs is truly one of a kind. Since 1991, Congress has recognized their work. It gives me great pleasure to honor and personally say "thank-you," to the many men and women in my district and across Washington State that provide this valuable service to our communities each and every day.

As the former Sheriff of King County in Washington State, I worked alongside the men and women in our communications center, depending on them daily to provide me with the correct information in order to safely carry out my duties and keep our communities safe. I will never forget the great lengths the men and women at our communications center took to be sure I was okay after a head-on collision in 1991, and the care and compassion they showed me. After the collision, I was able to get out of my car and check on the others involved in the accident. I left my portable radio behind in the patrol car, not knowing that the men and women at the communications center were nearly in tears and beside themselves with worry, wondering if I was safe. It is a difficult and sometimes emotional duty they perform, not always knowing what's happening on the other end of the line because they can't see what's going on but can hear the cries for help and the commotion and confusion of the scene. I cannot adequately express how much it meant to me, knowing they cared so much about my well-being. The men and women at our communications centers are truly heroes to the law enforcement officers and citizens they serve.

A former Chief of Police in Colorado once wrote that dispatchers must possess, among other things, the humor of David Letterman, the endurance of the Energizer Bunny and the patience of Job. It is not often that such traits are found in one person. However, in my experience, to find such a person one need look no further than the telecommunications section of a local police, fire or Sheriff's office. These men and women work tirelessly with the heart of a servant; always ensuring the needs of the callers and the first responders they dispatch are met and placing their security above all else.

I encourage all my friends, colleagues, and neighbors to take a moment during this week

to thank a telecommunications dispatcher—let them know their service is appreciated and encourage them to continue providing guidance and help to their fellow citizens when they're most in need.

HONORING THE VISIT OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. EMANUEL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the visit of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, to the United States. In addition to commemorating this Pontiff's first visit to our Nation as the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church, today also marks the 81st birthday for his Holiness. The theme for the Pope's U.S. visit is "On Christian Hope," and on behalf of the more than 200,000 Catholic residents of the Fifth Congressional District of Illinois, I would like to welcome Pope Benedict XVI to Washington, DC and the United States.

Pope Benedict XVI was elected the 265th Pope in August of 2005. Since that time he has traveled to nations all over the world spreading the beliefs of hope, peace, and justice. Throughout his life the Holy Father has touched the hearts of millions. From his humble beginnings in Germany through his current role as leader of the Roman Catholic Church, his religious doctrine and his belief in faith, hope, and kindness have guided his commitment to the Church and people around the world. He has connected with Catholics and non-Catholics alike through his dedication for advancement of human rights for all people.

The Holy Father has been honored throughout the world as a leader on issues that affect people of all races, religions, and creeds. He is an advocate for the poor and the needy, the hungry and the old, the sick and the tired. The belief that all citizens of the world should have rights is not simply a religious belief, but a human belief and one that we as Americans should honor.

Roman Catholics make up over 20 percent of the United States population and over one-sixth of the world's population. The Roman Catholic Church in the United States operates schools, universities, shelters, and hospitals to help and educate people of this great nation.

Madam Speaker, the Holy Father is a dedicated servant to the Church and his followers, and we are proud to welcome him on his first visit to America. I wish him continued success in his efforts for human rights and spiritual advancement, as well as a very happy birthday.

HONORING THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND RETIREMENT OF KEITH D. MCFARLAND, PH.D.

HON. RALPH M. HALL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

Mr. HALL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor a true public servant who has dedicated his entire life to higher education, Dr. Keith D. McFarland.