AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

Catholic Church is fortunate to have such strong, capable, decent leadership. And America is fortunate to have such strong leaders in our midst.

I want to thank the cardinals and bishops who are here, and thank you for your service and love for your fellow mankind.

I've been struck by a lot of things as I've had the opportunity to meet the leadership of the Catholic Church. I think the thing that has captured my heart the most is the not only universal care for the weak and the suffering but also the strong focus on making sure every child is educated.

And for those of you involved with the education system in America, thank you for your hard work. For those of you who are the administrators, thanks for providing great education. For those who give your hard-earned dollars to support the education systems around America, please continue to do so. [*Laughter*] Isn't that right, Bishop? [*Laughter*] It's an incredibly important part of the mosaic of a hopeful tomorrow.

I also appreciate the prayers of many of my fellow Americans. Many times layman and leader alike says, "Mr. President, we pray for you," and for that I'm most grateful. It does remind me that I think there's a great awakening in America; people are rediscovering the inspiration of faith in their lives and the importance of faith in our society. Faith gives our lives dignity, and faith gives our lives direction. Faith makes our Nation more just and more generous and welcoming.

All of you are part of the humanizing mission which is part of the "Great Commission" and the Pope John Paul II Cultural Center, which we will dedicate tomorrow, will bring this message to generations of Americans in this Capital of our Nation. The best way to honor Pope John Paul II, truly one of the great men, is to take his teaching seriously, is to listen to his words and put his words and teachings into action here in America. This is a challenge we must accept.

But you know something about our country? With the right focus and the right leadership, it's a challenge this Nation will accept, because this is a great land. The greatness of the country lies in the hearts and souls of our citizens. And again, I want to thank those of you who inspire and teach love and compassion and hope.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:18 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Statement on Proposed Legislation To Implement the Faith-Based Initiative

March 21, 2001

Earlier this year, I sent to the Congress my agenda to rally America's armies of compassion to address many of our toughest community challenges.

Government does not have a monopoly on compassion. And while Government cannot be replaced by charities, it should welcome them as partners, not view them as rivals.

Today, on a bipartisan basis, Members of the House and Senate took important first steps to advance this agenda to aid churches, synagogues, mosques, and communities in helping neighbors in need.

I welcome the bipartisan proposals that have been offered in the House by Representative J.C. Watts, Representative Tony Hall, and Speaker Dennis Hastert, and in the Senate by Senator Rick Santorum and Senator Joseph Lieberman. These new legislative initiatives demonstrate that momentum continues to build behind my agenda to rally America's armies of compassion. They represent a bipartisan consensus that Government must support our quiet heroes who are lifting lives and healing neighborhoods one heart and one act of kindness at a time.

I will continue to work in a bipartisan fashion with Congress to help those most in need by encouraging charitable giving and eliminating barriers to charitable works.

Remarks to the National Newspaper Association Government Affairs Conference

March 22, 2001

The President. Thanks for coming, and thanks for having me. Diane, I appreciate so very much the invitation. Ken, thank you for escorting me up here. And Jerry, thank you