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UDIENZA ALLA DELEGAZIONE DI PARLAMENTARI DEL CONGRESSO DEGLI STATI UNITI D'AMERICA

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Alle 11.15 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Giovanni Paolo II ha ricevuto in Udienza i membri della Delegazione di Parlamentari del Congresso degli Stati Uniti d'America in occasione della consegna della "Congressional Gold Medal" ed ha loro rivolto le parole di saluto che riportiamo qui di seguito:

• SALUTO DEL SANTO PADRE

Mr. Speaker,

Members of Congress,

Distinguished Guests,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican this morning, and I am honored by the gracious gesture which has brought you here. It is not for the Successor of the Apostle Peter to seek honors, but I gladly accept the Congressional Gold Medal as a recognition that in my ministry there has echoed a word that can touch every human heart. It has been my endeavor to proclaim the word of God, which on the very first page of the Bible tells us that man and woman have been created in his very image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:26).

From this great truth there flows all that the Church says and does to defend human dignity and to promote human life. This is a truth which we contemplate in the glory of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crucified and risen from the dead. In the years of my ministry, but especially in the Jubilee Year just ended, I have invited all to turn to Jesus in order to discover in new and deeper ways the truth of man. For it is Christ alone who fully reveals man to himself and makes known his sublime destiny (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 22). To see the truth of Christ is to experience with deep amazement the worth and dignity of every human being, which is the Good News of the Gospel and the heart of Christianity (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 10).

I accept this award as a sign that you, as legislators, recognize the importance of defending human dignity

without compromise, so that your nation may not fail to live up to its high responsibilities in a world where human rights are so often disregarded. Therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for this Congressional Gold Medal. In offering my good wishes for the New Year, I invoke upon you, your families and all whom you represent "the peace of God which is beyond understanding" (*Phil* 4:7). May God bless you all!

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