

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024

Remarks at a St. Patrick's Day Brunch With Catholic Leaders

March 17, 2024

The President. Thank you. Well, happy St. Patrick's Day.

Please—[*applause*]. Well, thank you, thank you, thank you. Thank you for making me look so good in front of my daughter. [*Laughter*] Please sit.

Well, good morning, everyone.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. Taoiseach, I'm so glad to get to spend the day together again.

Your Eminence, thank you very much for being here as well.

I'm glad to be joined by so many friends and—from the Catholic Bishops Conference, as well as the Archdiocese of Washington.

And it's great to see our Special Envoy for our economic affairs with Northern Ireland, Joe Kennedy. Where are you, Joe Joe? It doesn't go very much noticed, but Joe is doing one heck of a job—you really are, Joe—pulling things together. Thank you.

And it's great to have Kerry and Kathleen Kennedy. Where are Kerry and Kathleen?

Audience member. Hello.

The President. There you are. Welcome almost home. It wouldn't be St. Patrick's Day without you.

And, also, Sister Carol Keehan and Sister Simone Campbell. Where's—where are you, Sisters? The Nuns on the Bus. [*Laughter*] You remember, right? [*Laughter*] God, I love you guys. Thanks for being such great, great partners.

And welcome, everyone, to St. Patrick's Day at the White House.

You know, this has always been a special day for the Biden family and the Biden household. It's not just about heritage, but it really is about faith. So much of it being Irish means to be connected to the Catholic teachings that I grew up with.

I went to St.——

[*At this point, the President briefly imitated a Scranton, PA, accent as follows.*]

——as they say in Scranton, "St. Paul's," meaning "Paul's"—St. Paul's School in Scranton, Holy Rosary in Claymont and St. Helena's, and then Archmere Academy.

And you know, I like the belief that we've learned from the beginning: that we're all created equal in the image of God, that every single human being deserves to be treated with dignity.

My dad used to have an expression. My dad would say: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay.'"

And it's not—you know, that is—it's just not enough to wish the world would be better. We have a duty to make it better.

My best friend in the world, my sister Valerie has—Val, stand up. I want people to—[*applause*].

Valerie used to be 3 years younger than me. Now, she's 20 years younger than me.
[*Laughter*] I might note, there's no woman in the Biden household as old as any man in the household. [*Laughter*]

And you know, our mother, Catherine Eugenia Finnegan Biden, used to say: "Joey"—and I mean this; this is what she'd say, repeatedly—"as long as you're alive, you have an obligation to strive. And you're not done until you've seen the face of God. So keep moving." That was her expression, for real.

And that belief inspired generations of Irish women and men to keep going, even in the face of enormous setbacks. And it convinced millions of Irish immigrants, including my ancestors and many of you here, to—here today—to leave their beloved homeland and begin a new life in America.

It led Ireland to become a global voice of liberty—which it still is—equality and peace. And it continues to inspire the work of Catholic organizations represented here today.

The Catholic Church has always stepped in when people were suffering to meet their needs: food, shelter, health care, education. Your organizations make real the instructions of Jesus and the—gave his apostles, "Whatever you do unto the least of my brothers—these, my brothers and sisters, you do unto me." And that's kind of the essence of who we all are.

I want to thank you all for the incredible, valuable work you do to support the vulnerable people in communities across the United States and, I might add, around the world.

So thank you all for being here. Happy St. Patrick's Day.

And now I'd like his Eminence, Cardinal Pierre, to come up here and to maybe give us a blessing.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Leo Varadkar of Ireland; the Holy See's Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S. Archbishop Christophe Pierre; Kerry Kennedy, president, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, and her sister, former Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend of Maryland; Carol Keehan, former president and chief executive officer, Catholic Health Association of the U.S.; and Simone Campbell, former executive director, NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice. He also referred to his sister Valerie Biden Owens.

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