

The world is also thankful for the thousands of peacekeepers Ireland sends to other troubled corners of the globe, everywhere from Kosovo to East Timor. And we're thankful for the generous development aid Ireland sends to the world's poorest nations.

But Ireland's most precious gift to the world has been the Irish. No nation has benefited more from Irish talent and industry than the United States. You've given us Presidents, nine signers of the Declaration of Independence. In fact, so many Irish served as volunteers in the Continental Army, a lord in Parliament lamented, "We have lost America through the Irish." [Laughter]

Today, over 44 million Irish Americans reinforce the natural bonds of friendship between our nations. The United States is proud of our strong ties of trade and investment and proud that they have contributed

to the strong economy that you have led. We look forward to working even more closely with Ireland, particularly now that it serves on the U.N. Security Council.

According to legend, Saint Patrick returned to Ireland after hearing the Irish people beckon him in a dream to "Come and walk among us once more." Well, today, it is a world that beckons the Irish to continue walking among us and sharing with us the rich culture, the large hearts, and good works.

So Mr. Prime Minister, America is proud to call Ireland a friend, not just on Saint Patrick's Day but on every day.

Welcome.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Reception March 16, 2001

Thank you very much. It sounds like we invited some rowdy Irish Americans. [Laughter] Thank you all for coming. *Taoiseach*, thank you very much, sir. Secretary of State of Northern Ireland, Dr. Reid; First Minister Trimble; Deputy First Minister Mallon—thank you all for being here.

I want to thank the Ambassadors who are here. I want to thank the other leaders from Northern Ireland who are here. It's most gracious of you to take your time to come and celebrate Saint Patrick's Day with us. Mr. Speaker, it's good to see you again, sir, as well.

The *Taoiseach* and I just had an excellent meeting. We spent a good hour of frank dialog. He gave me Dublin's perspective on the peace process in Northern Ireland, just as Prime Minister Blair gave me Lon-

don's perspective when we met last month. An Irish proverb tell us that a friend's eye is a good mirror. And I can tell you that what is striking about my meetings with both Prime Ministers is how similar their perspectives are, how optimistic they are, and how determined they are.

It is clear that all sides want the Good Friday agreement to succeed. It is also clear that all sides are seeking to overcome very difficult internal obstacles and to keep up forward momentum. The agreement negotiated by both Prime Ministers in Belfast last week is a reflection of a common commitment. As always, we deeply appreciate the efforts.

And again, I want to pledge what I said yesterday: The United States stands ready to help. It is in our national interest that

there be a lasting peace, a real, lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

I also want to say how much I appreciate the contributions that Irish Americans have made to the cause of peace. Many of you are right here in this room, and our Nation thanks you. By supporting those committed to a peaceful approach, you're truly giving something back to your native land.

Today is also about celebrating what Irish Americans have given to their adopted land. The White House itself was designed by an Irish American. This fact about America's home is symbolic of the contributions made by millions of Irish of both Catholic and Protestant persuasion.

Your industry and talent and imagination have enriched our commerce and enriched our culture. The strong record of public service has fortified our democracy, and the

strong ties to family and faith and community have strengthened our Nation's character. In short, the Irish are a big reason why we'll always be proud to call ourselves a nation of immigrants.

Happy Saint Patrick's Day.

And now, would you join us, please, for some refreshments in the State Room.

Welcome to the White House.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland; Secretary of State for Northern Ireland John Reid and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and First Minister David Trimble and Deputy First Minister Seamus Mallon, Northern Ireland Executive.

Message on the Observance of Saint Patrick's Day, 2001 *March 16, 2001*

I am pleased to send warm greetings to those celebrating St. Patrick's Day. Each year on March 17, joyous events commemorate the remarkable life of Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. Born in Britain many centuries ago, Patrick was captured as a teenager by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. During six years of forced labor as a herdsman, he looked to his religious faith for sustenance.

Patrick eventually escaped and returned to Britain, where he dreamed that he was being called to serve as a missionary. He began to study for the priesthood and returned to Ireland, dedicating his life to preaching Christianity. Patrick endured hardship and suffering, but his bravery and devotion to his faith became legendary in the hearts and minds of the Irish people.

Centuries later, St. Patrick's Day pays tribute to an incredible hero and to the rich cultural heritage of the Emerald Isle. Countless Americans symbolically proclaim Irish ancestry by taking part in the festivities celebrating the stories and traditions of Ireland. St. Patrick's Day is also a time to honor the contributions of Irish Americans to our Nation's history and way of life, enriching the United States in great measure.

As we move into the 21st century, Americans look forward to continued friendship and goodwill with the people of Ireland. Laura joins me in sending best wishes for a wonderful St. Patrick's Day.

GEORGE W. BUSH