

Remarks Honoring President Thomas Jefferson's 265th Birthday April 14, 2008

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. Laura and I are so honored you are here. I welcome members of my Cabinet, Members of the United States Senate, folks who work in the White House, the Governor of Virginia, and Anne Holton. Thank you all for coming, really happy you're here.

We're here tonight to commemorate the 265th birthday of Thomas Jefferson, here in a room where he once walked and in a home where he once lived. In this house, President Jefferson spread the word that liberty was the right of every individual. In this house, Jefferson sent Lewis and Clark off on the mission that helped make America a continental nation. And in this house, Jefferson was known to receive guests in his bathrobe and slippers. [*Laughter*] Laura said, "No." [*Laughter*] I don't have a bathrobe. [*Laughter*]

With a single sentence, Thomas Jefferson changed the history of the world. After countless centuries, when the powerful and the privileged governed as they pleased, Jefferson proclaimed as a self-evident truth that liberty was a right given to all people by an Almighty.

Here in America, that truth was not fully realized in Jefferson's own lifetime. As he observed the condition of slaves in America, Jefferson said, quote, "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just [and] that His justice cannot sleep forever." Less than 40 years after his death, justice was awakened in America, and a new era of freedom dawned.

Today, on the banks of the Tidal Basin, a statue of Thomas Jefferson stands in a rotunda that is a memorial to both the man and the ideas that built this Nation. There, on any day of the week, you will find men

and women of all creeds, colors, races, and religions. You will find scholars, school-children, and visitors from every part of our country. And you will find each of them looking upward in quiet reflection on the liturgy of freedom, the words of Thomas Jefferson inscribed on the memorial's walls.

The power of Jefferson's words do not stop at water's edge. They beckon the friends of liberty on even the most distant shores. They're a source of inspiration for people in young democracies like Afghanistan and Lebanon and Iraq. And they are a source of hope for people in nations like Belarus and Burma, Cuba, Venezuela, Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Zimbabwe, where the struggle for freedom continues.

Thomas Jefferson left us on July 4th, 1826, 50 years to the day after our Declaration of Independence was adopted. In one of the great harmonies of history, his friend and rival John Adams died on the very same day. Adams's last words were, "Thomas Jefferson survives." And he still does today, and he will live on forever, because the desire to live in freedom is the eternal hope of mankind.

And now it's my pleasure to welcome Wilfred McClay to the stage.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia and his wife Anne Holton; and Wilfred M. McClay, SunTrust Bank chair of excellence in humanities and professor of history, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Statement on the Anniversary of the Virginia Tech Shootings in Blacksburg, Virginia

April 15, 2008

April 16, 2007, brought the deadliest day of violence on a college campus in our Nation's history. The horrific crimes committed at Virginia Tech University filled our souls with sadness. One year later, we remember the victims murdered and wounded that day.

We join our fellow Americans in praying for the families and friends whose hearts ache for their lost loved ones. We continue

to be amazed by the extraordinary Hokie spirit and inspired by the survivors of this tragedy. Students, teachers, and alumni have overcome evil with good by supporting each other with love and compassion. We are humbled by their resilience and confident in the university's bright future.

We pray that God will continue to comfort and heal the people of the Virginia Tech community.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Pope Benedict XVI

April 16, 2008

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 with 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 to 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