

## Statement on the Observance of Yom Kippur September 22, 2015

As Jews across America, Israel, and the world gather for the sacred service of Kol Nidre, Michelle and I extend our wishes for an easy fast to all those observing Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement is a time for humility, reflection, and repentance, a chance to be honest with ourselves and one another about our shortcomings. Yet Yom Kippur is also a day of

hope. Through our prayers and through our actions, as individuals and as a community, we can better bridge the realities of our world with the ideals and values we share. On this special day, may our common humanity unite us, and may our common faith in a better future inspire us to continue healing our world. *G'mar chatimah tovah.*

## Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Pope Francis September 23, 2015

*President Obama.* Good morning.

*Audience members.* Good morning!

*President Obama.* What a beautiful day the Lord has made. Holy Father, on behalf of Michelle and myself, welcome to the White House. I should explain that our backyard is not typically this crowded—[laughter]—but the size and spirit of today's gathering is just a small reflection of the deep devotion of some 70 million American Catholics. It reflects, as well, the way that your message of love and hope has inspired so many people across our Nation and around the world. So, on behalf of the American people, it is my great honor and privilege to welcome you to the United States of America.

Today we mark many firsts. Your Holiness, you've been celebrated as the first Pope from the Americas. This is your first visit to the United States. And you are also the first Pontiff to share an encyclical through a Twitter account. [Laughter]

Holy Father, your visit not only allows us, in some small way, to reciprocate the extraordinary hospitality that you extended to me at the Vatican last year. It also reveals how much all Americans, from every background and every faith, value the role that the Catholic Church plays in strengthening America. From my time working in impoverished neighborhoods with the Catholic Church in Chicago, to my travels as President, I have seen firsthand how, every single day, Catholic communities, priests,

nuns, laity are feeding the hungry, healing the sick, sheltering the homeless, educating our children, and fortifying the faith that sustains so many.

And what is true in America is true around the world. From the busy streets of Buenos Aires to the remote villages in Kenya, Catholic organizations serve the poor, minister to prisoners, build schools, build homes, operate orphanages and hospitals. And just as the Church has stood with those struggling to break the chains of poverty, the Church so often has given voice and hope to those seeking to break the chains of violence and oppression.

And yet I believe the excitement around your visit, Holy Father, must be attributed not only to your role as Pope, but to your unique qualities as a person. In your humility, your embrace of simplicity, in the gentleness of your words, in the generosity of your spirit, we see a living example of Jesus' teachings, a leader whose moral authority comes not just through words, but also through deeds.

You call on all of us, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, to put the "least of these" at the center of our concerns. You remind us that in the eyes of God our measure as individuals, and our measure as a society, is not determined by wealth or power or station or celebrity, but by how well we hearken to Scripture's call to lift up the poor and the marginalized, to stand up for justice and against inequality, and to ensure that every human being is able to live in

dignity, because we are all made in the image of God.

You remind us that “the Lord’s most powerful message” is mercy. And that means welcoming the stranger with empathy and a truly open heart, from the refugee who flees war-torn lands to the immigrant who leaves home in search of a better life. It means showing compassion and love for the marginalized and the outcast, to those who have suffered, and those who have caused suffering and seek redemption. You remind us of the costs of war, particularly on the powerless and defenseless, and urge us toward the imperative of peace.

Holy Father, we are grateful for your invaluable support of our new beginning with the Cuban people, which holds out the promise of better relations between our countries, greater cooperation across our hemisphere, and a better life for the Cuban people. We thank you for your passionate voice against the deadly conflicts that ravage the lives of so many men, women, and children and your call for nations to resist the sirens of war and resolve disputes through diplomacy.

You remind us that people are only truly free when they can practice their faith freely. Here in the United States, we cherish religious liberty. It was the basis for so much of what brought us together. And here in the United States, we cherish our religious liberty, but around the world, at this very moment, children of God, including Christians, are targeted and even killed because of their faith. Believers are prevented from gathering at their places of worship. The faithful are imprisoned, and churches are destroyed. So we stand with you in defense of religious freedom and interfaith dialogue, knowing that people everywhere must be able to live out their faith free from fear and free from intimidation.

And, Holy Father, you remind us that we have a sacred obligation to protect our planet, God’s magnificent gift to us. We support your call to all world leaders to support the communities most vulnerable to changing climate and to come together to preserve our precious world for future generations.

Your Holiness, in your words and deeds, you set a profound moral example. And in these gentle, but firm, reminders of our obligations to God and to one another, you are shaking us out of our complacency. All of us may, at times, experience discomfort when we contemplate the distance between how we lead our daily lives and what we know to be true, what we know to be right. But I believe such discomfort is a blessing, for it points to something better. You shake our conscience from slumber. You call on us to rejoice in Good News and give us confidence that we can come together in humility and service and pursue a world that is more loving, more just, and more free. Here at home and around the world, may our generation heed your call to “never remain on the sidelines of this march of living hope.”

For that great gift of hope, Holy Father, we thank you and welcome you with joy and gratitude to the United States of America.

*Pope Francis.* Good morning.

*Audience members.* Good morning!

*Pope Francis.* Mr. President, I am deeply grateful for your welcome in the name of the all Americans. As a son of an immigrant family, I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families.

I look forward to these days of encounter and dialogue in which I hope to listen to and share many of the hopes and dreams of the American people. During my visit, I will have the honor of addressing Congress, where I hope, as a brother of this country, to offer words of encouragement to those called to guide the Nation’s political future in fidelity to its founding principles. It will—I will also travel to Philadelphia for the eighth World Meeting of Families to celebrate and support the institutions of marriage and the family at this critical moment in the history of our civilization.

Mr. President, together with their fellow citizens, American Catholics are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive, to safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities, and to rejecting every form of injustice, discrimination. With countless other people of good will, they are likewise

concerned that efforts to build a just and wisely ordered society respect their deepest concerns and the right to religious liberty. That freedom remains one of America's most precious possessions. And as my brothers, the United States bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it.

Mr. President, I'm finding it encouraging that you are proposing an initiative for reducing air pollution. Accepting the urgency, it seems clear to me also that climate change is a problem we can no longer be left to our future generation. When it comes to the care of our common home, we are living at a critical moment of history. We still have time to make the change needed to bring about a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.

Such change demands on our part a serious and responsible recognition not only of the kind of the world we may be leaving to our children, but also to the millions of people living under a system which has overlooked them. Our common home has been part of this group of the excluded, which cries out to heaven and which today powerfully strikes our homes, our cities, our societies. To use a telling phrase of the Reverend Martin Luther King,

we can say that we have defaulted on a promissory note, and now is the time to honor it.

We know by faith that the Creator does not abandon us; He never forsakes his loving plan or repents of having created us. Humanity has the ability to work together in building our common home. As Christians inspired by this certainty, we wish to commit ourselves to the conscious and responsible care of our common home.

Mr. President, the efforts which were recently made to mend broken relationships and to open new doors to cooperation within our human family represent positive steps along the path of reconciliation, justice, and freedom.

I would like all men and women of good will in this great Nation to support the efforts of the international community to protect the vulnerable in our world and to stimulate integral and inclusive models of development so that our brothers and sisters everywhere may know the blessings of peace and prosperity which God wills for all his children.

Mr. President, once again, I thank you for your welcome, and look—I look forward to these days in your country. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:32 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where Pope Francis was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors.

## Statement on the Death of Lawrence P. “Yogi” Berra *September 23, 2015*

Yogi Berra was an American original: a Hall of Famer and humble veteran, prolific jokester and jovial prophet. He epitomized what it meant to be a sportsman and a citizen, with a big heart, competitive spirit, and a self-

less desire to open baseball to everyone, no matter their background. Michelle and I offer our deepest condolences to his family, his friends, and his fans in New York and across the world.

## Statement on the Observance of the Hajj and Eid al-Adha *September 23, 2015*

As more than 2 million Muslims from around the world and across the United States mark the end of their holy pilgrimage of Hajj in

Mecca, Michelle and I extend our warmest wishes to Muslims around the world celebrating Eid al-Adha.