

H. Res. 362

In the House of Representatives, U.S.,

September 15, 1998.

Whereas Pope John Paul II earlier this year undertook a first ever Papal visit to Cuba to speak directly to the Cuban people;

Whereas the Pope led the Cuban people in celebration throughout the island, including leading the largest open-air mass since 1959 on the last day of his visit in Jose Marti Plaza;

Whereas the Pope spoke directly with the Cuban people and the Cuban Government about the importance of fundamental human rights and the necessity for “each person enjoying freedom of expression, being free to undertake initiatives and make proposals within civil society, and enjoying appropriate freedom of association”;

Whereas the Pope called for political freedom in Cuba, including a call to release “those who are isolated, persecuted, imprisoned for various offenses or for reasons of conscience, for ideas which though dissident are nonetheless peaceful”;

Whereas the Pope called for greater religious freedom in Cuba and a “harmonious social climate and a suitable legislation that enables every person and every religious confession to live their faith freely, to express that faith

in the context of public life and to count on adequate resources and opportunities to bring its spiritual, moral and civil benefits to bear on the life of the nation”;

Whereas Cuban churches of all faiths supported the Papal visit and emerged from the visit with expectations of greater prominence and freedom to operate in Cuban society;

Whereas the Pope invoked the name of Father Felix Varela y Morales, “an undeniable patriot”, who “spoke of democracy, judging it to be the political project best in keeping with human nature”, and the name of Jose Marti, “a writer and a teacher in the fullest sense of the word, deeply committed to democracy and independence, a patriot, a loyal friend even to those who did not share his political program”;

Whereas the Pope remembered “those people who for various reasons have left the country but still feel that they are sons and daughters of Cuba” and established that “the Cuban people should be the protagonists of their own future and destiny”;

Whereas the Pope both called for greater integration of the people of Cuba into the international community and criticized the Castro Government by saying “imposed isolation strikes the people indiscriminately, making it ever more difficult for the weakest to enjoy the bare essentials of decent living”; and

Whereas the Pope challenged Cuba and the international community of nations by saying “May Cuba with all its magnificent potential, open itself up to the world, and may the world open itself up to Cuba”: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) commends Pope John Paul II for his visit to Cuba, for his frank criticism of the Cuban Government, and his message of hope to the Cuban people; and

(2) urges the international community to join the United States in actively supporting the freedom and democratic reforms for Cuba embodied in the Pope's homilies which have peacefully united Cubans in the common cause of liberty.

Attest:

Clerk.