

ture of human rights and the foundation of every truly free society. No one is permitted to suppress those rights by using coercive power to impose an answer to the mystery of man.

To cut oneself off from the reality of difference—or, worse, to attempt to stamp out that difference—is to cut oneself off from the possibility of sounding the depths of the mystery of human life. The truth about man is the unchangeable standard by which all cultures are judged; but every culture has something to teach us about one or other dimension of that complex truth. Thus the “difference” which some find so threatening can, through respectful dialogue, become the source of a deeper understanding of the mystery of human existence.

11. In this context, we need to clarify the essential difference between an unhealthy form of nationalism, which teaches contempt for other nations or cultures, and patriotism, which is a proper love of one’s country. True patriotism never seeks to advance the well-being of one’s own nation at the expense of others. For in the end this would harm one’s own nation as well: Doing wrong damages both aggressor and victim. Nationalism, particularly in its most radical forms, is thus the antithesis of true patriotism, and today we must ensure that extreme nationalism does not continue to give rise to new forms of the aberrations of totalitarianism. This is a commitment which also holds true, obviously, in

cases where religion itself is made the basis of nationalism, as unfortunately happens in certain manifestations of so-called “fundamentalism.”

Freedom and moral truth

12. Ladies and gentlemen! Freedom is the measure of man’s dignity and greatness. Living the freedom sought by individuals and peoples is a great challenge to man’s spiritual growth and to the moral vitality of nations. The basic question which we must all face today is the responsible use of freedom, in both its personal and social dimensions. Our reflection must turn then to the question of the moral structure of freedom, which is the inner architecture of the culture of freedom.

Freedom is not simply the absence of tyranny or oppression. Nor is freedom a license to do whatever we like. Freedom has an inner “logic” which distinguishes it and ennobles it: Freedom is ordered to the truth, and is fulfilled in man’s quest for truth and in man’s living in the truth. Detached from the truth about the human person, freedom deteriorates into license in the lives of individuals, and, in political life, it becomes the caprice of the most powerful and the arrogance of power. Far from being a limitation upon freedom or a threat to it, reference to the truth about the human person—a truth universally knowable through the moral law written

On America’s heritage

From Pope John Paul II’s speech on arrival in the United States on Oct. 4 at Newark Airport:

Especially since the events of 1989, the role of the United States in the world has taken on a new prominence. Your widespread influence is at once political, economic, military and, due to your communications media, cultural. It is vital for the human family that in continuing to seek advancement in many different fields—science, business, education, and art, and wherever else your creativity leads you—America keeps compassion, generosity, and concern for others at the very heart of its efforts. . . .

From its beginning until now, the United States has been a haven for generation after generation of new arrivals. . . . It is my prayerful hope that America will persevere in its own best traditions of openness and opportunity. It would indeed be sad if the United States were to turn away from that enterprising spirit which has always sought the most practical and responsible ways of continuing to share with others the blessings God has richly bestowed here.

From Pope John Paul II’s homily given at the Oct. 8 Mass in Baltimore’s Camden Yards:

One hundred and thirty years ago, President Abraham Lincoln asked whether a nation “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” could “long endure.” President Lincoln’s question is no less a question for the present generation of Americans. Democracy cannot be sustained without a shared commitment to certain moral truths about the human person and human community. The basic question before a democratic society is: “How ought we to live together?” In seeking an answer to this question, can society exclude moral truth and moral reasoning? Can the Biblical wisdom which played such a formative part in the very founding of your country be excluded from that debate? Would not doing so mean that America’s founding documents no longer have any defining content, but are only the formal dressing of changing opinion? Would not doing so mean that tens of millions of Americans could no longer offer the contribution of their deepest convictions to the formation of public policy? Surely it is important for America that the moral truths which make freedom possible should be passed on to each new generation. Every generation of Americans needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.