



The Holy See

FINAL WORDS OF JOHN PAUL II

AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST LOUIS St. Louis, January 27, 1999

As my visit to St. Louis comes to an end, I wish to express my appreciation to Vice President and Mrs. Gore for greeting me before my departure for Rome. I thank those associated with the Federal Government for all that they have done to make this visit possible. My gratitude goes to the Governor of the State of Missouri, and to the Mayor of the City of St. Louis, and to all the members of their staffs. I thank the Police and all those who have done so much for security and public order. I thank the civic and business communities of St. Louis for the support they have given. The welcome extended to me by my fellow Christians and by the members of other religious communities has been most gracious. I hope you will accept my sincere thanks and the assurance of my friendship in the cause of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue and cooperation. It has been a moving experience to visit the people of St. Louis. I would have wished to meet personally each one of the young people at the Kiel Center, and all the many other people at the Trans World Dome, and here in the Cathedral Basilica, as well as along the routes and at the Airport. A word of thanks goes to the Cardinals and my brother Bishops of the United States who have come to St. Louis. It was a pleasure to know that so many other Dioceses sent representatives. I am grateful to you all. In particular I wish to say thanks to the local Church of St. Louis. I am indebted to all the many dedicated people – organizers, committee members and volunteers – who have labored long and hard behind the scenes. Nor do I forget the hidden but effective support of all who prayed for the spiritual outcome of this event, especially the contemplatives in their monasteries. A special word of thanks and appreciation is due to Archbishop Rigali, who just two days ago celebrated his fifth anniversary as your dedicated Pastor. A few months ago, a pilgrimage from St. Louis came to Rome. We met on the steps of St. Peter's, where they sang to me: "Meet me in St. Louis. . . meet me at the Dome!" With God's help, we have done it. I will always remember St. Louis. I will remember all of you. *God bless St. Louis! God bless America!*