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# **Three Bicentennial Addresses**

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**Justice in America:  
The Dream and the Reality**

**Religious Liberty  
in the International Scene**

**American Aspirations  
and the Grounds of Hope**



*Dear Alumni, Alumnae, and Friends:*

The Bicentennial was a great experience for all Americans, in that it made all of us think about the inner meaning of America — something we mainly take for granted.

I talked dozens of times in 1976 on Bicentennial themes. This necessitated three basic talks so that I could do variations on the different themes. The first talk was the most difficult to write because it involved much background reading, colonial history not being one of my strong points. I did most of the reading and writing in Yucatan, Mexico, over the Christmas vacation last year. In the first talk, I tried to show how America's basic documents, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, came to be as they are, two great and most unusual political statements. Since bicentennials look to the present reality and future hope, as well as to the past, the first talk also tries to sound a note of optimism, something strangely lacking in much of this year's Bicentennial writing by intellectuals.

The second talk was written during Holy Week at my brother's home in California. The basic theme is religious freedom. Our First Amendment is a startling departure from a political position on Church and State that began 1,400 years ago with Constantine and St. Augustine. By disestablishing religion and making it voluntary, both as to membership and support, our Founding Fathers really established religion in America more strongly than it exists anywhere else in the world. I also used the second talk to re-emphasize one of my favorite themes, the interdependence of all the world today, a good contrast to the necessary independence of times past.

The third talk was written during early June at Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, where I was making my annual retreat. Here the basic theme is justice. The whole 200 years of America's history is mainly a story of the enlargement of justice for all of our citizens. This story is still in progress, although I believe that we made more progress in enlarging equality of opportunity for all of our citizens during the sixties than any country ever has in a decade.

You will find facts from the first talk overflowing into the other two. Personally, I think the third talk is best because there I was mainly speaking from my heart, and less from the history books.

For whatever casual interest it may have, here are some of the places where variations on all of these themes were spoken this past year:

National Conference of Christians and Jews  
Miami, Florida, February 26, 1976

Notre Dame-Saint Mary's Bicentennial Conference  
March 11, 1976

Conference on Religious Freedom  
Quaker Hall, Philadelphia, April 29, 1976

Spring Convocation and Degree  
Davidson College, North Carolina, April 30, 1976

Commencement and Degree  
New Rochelle College, New York, May 23, 1976

American Judicature Society and Justice Award  
Philadelphia, July 4, 1976

Austrian-American Bicentennial  
Schloss-Klesheim, Salzburg, Austria, July 5, 1976

Summer Commencement and Degree  
University of Denver, Colorado, August 13, 1976

State University of New York Award  
Stony Brook, Long Island, September 14, 1976

Convocation and Degree  
Beloit College, Wisconsin, October 14, 1976

There were a few others, and there will be a few more, but these are the main ones. It has been a busy year. These talks come to you both as a historical record and an affectionate gift.

God bless America and all of you, too.

Ever devotedly in Notre Dame,



(Rev.) Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C.  
President

November 1, 1976