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Senate

The Senate met at 1 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, the source of all wisdom, thank You for the reminder at today's joint meeting of Congress that we should practice the Golden Rule. May this marvelous rule inspire our lawmakers to do unto others as they would have others do to them, bringing more civility and cooperation into our legislative process. May our Senators see their legislative vocation as an opportunity to do good for all people, defending and preserving the dignity of humanity as they learn to seek Your image, even for the most vulnerable in our world. May the Golden Rule motivate our lawmakers to reduce violence in our world, to give hope to those trapped in cycles of poverty, and to build bridges to overcome historic differences. Lord, help us all to seize this moment in history to serve Your purposes for our lives, leaving the world better than we found it.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SASSE). The Democratic leader is recognized.

HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, today Members of Congress from both Houses were honored to attend a joint meeting of Congress and receive an address from His Holiness Pope Francis, the 266th Pope of the Catholic Church.

The Holy Father's visit to address a joint meeting was made possible by the foresight and efforts of Speaker JOHN BOEHNER, as well as the hard work and dedication of the House and the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the entire congressional community. Everything worked out just fine. Pope Francis captured the heart and consciousness of the world with his message of love, compassion, respect, and good will to all.

Sitting and listening to the speaker of the day, His Holiness Pope Francis, I am told this is the longest he has ever spoken at one time in English. He spoke slowly, and we had to listen very closely. So I went back and got a copy of the speech so I could read in my own slow way what he had said. A few things he said were really stunning. ''You are called''—he is talking to us—''to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics.'' Gee, that is good.

He said that he wanted to enter into a dialogue with the many ''elderly persons who are a storehouse of wisdom forged by experience.''

He said:

A delicate balance is required to combat violence perpetrated in the name of religion, an ideology or an economic system, while also safeguarding religious freedom, intellectual freedom and individual freedoms. . . . We know that in the attempt to be freed of the enemy without, we can be tempted to feed the enemy within.

These are visionary words.

He said that ''the voice of faith'' needs to ''continue to be heard, for it is a voice of fraternity and love,'' which brings out the best in each society. We need more people speaking out just as he did about the importance of faith.

He said:

If politics must truly be at the service of the human person, it follows that it cannot be a slave to the economy and finance. . . . We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners.

Now, I am not taking this line by line. I am just skipping through some things that stuck out in my mind.

If we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. . . . Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society.

He said, ''Fundamental relationships are being called into question, as is the very basis of . . . the family.''

I was so impressed with the intent of his remarks. I thought he did an extremely good job, and I am very happy that I had the opportunity to be there and listen. I admire the conviction and heart of His Holiness because it brings every effort of what we do, I think, to the forefront of what we try to do, to live up to what he suggests we should do. He inspired me, I hope all of us, with his commitment to compassion and consideration for the less fortunate.

I am certain this should come as a shock to no one, given his humble beginnings. He was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to immigrant parents. Pope Francis worked as a janitor, a bouncer, a lab assistant for a chemist before he started his seminary education. Since the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has committed to addressing the needs of the poor, extending mercy to those in need, and restoring joy to the world.

Pope Francis was once asked about his view of the church. He said that he viewed the church as ''a field hospital after battle.'' His unique approach to leading the world's 1.2 billion Catholics has captured the attention of billions, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, inspiring us all to live up to our highest values.

I was forced to remember today my mentor from my high school days to my time in Congress, who became the

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.

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