

REMARKS
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INAUGURATION OF GOVERNOR JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
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Your Honor, Governor Granholm, my fellow religious and civic leaders, and fellow citizens of our great state of Michigan:

In the name of the two million Catholics of the state of Michigan, I offer the promise of our prayers and a cooperative spirit to work with you, Governor Granholm, and all the newly-elected officials, as you begin your terms of office. You will soon be taking the oath of office, an act of commitment before God and all of us, a pledge to serve the common good by upholding the Constitution of our state, defending and promoting the social well-being of all, especially those most in need of the safety net which government is intended to provide. We thank you for the commitment that you are making and promise to work with you to promote the common good.

Even as you make a commitment, it is important for each of us to renew our own commitments to work for the well-being of all. In this great nation, we have both the right and the duty to voice our concerns and articulate our viewpoints and beliefs, even if at times they may not always be popular. And so it is, that as a Church, we will continue to raise questions about human rights and ways to promote them, especially that most fundamental of all rights: the right to life from the first moment of conception until last natural breath. As a Church, we feel compelled to address these issues in the public square not solely for theological reasons, but rather, because our message about life is fundamental to all that we hold, believe, and treasure as American citizens. The values we proclaim are truly enshrined in our national and state Constitutions and our country's Bill of Rights.

I am pleased that these inaugural festivities are dedicated to the theme of families. Indeed, our state will be strong and healthy to the extent we promote family values. We will join with all the newly-elected officials in trying to strengthen families and work for the rights of all to quality education, just employment and adequate wages. We will be ready and willing to partner with you as difficult economic decisions must be made regarding social welfare adjustments in the new state budget. You can rely on us to be a voice that will speak on behalf of immigrants and foreigners, the elderly and the very young, the mentally and physically

challenged, and all those who might otherwise be forgotten or marginalized, most especially the unborn.

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has designated this first day of the civic New Year as a World Day of Prayer for Peace, a cause that is particularly critical at this point in time as our nation's administration considers the very real possibility of war with Iraq. Whether on the global scale or in our families and local communities, there are daily tensions – tensions that are often based on differences of race, religion, or ethnic origin. And yet, we are all brothers and sisters of one common God and Father.

I encourage all involved in leadership in politics or in business, to set aside harsh words and judgments that we might work together as respectful partners, for indeed, the road to peace can be built only by respecting the dignity of each person. Let us dialogue together in an honest and open conversation in the best tradition of our nation, refusing to tarnish our civic discourse with any lack of respect for the voices or experiences of others.

As a theme for today's World Day of Prayer for Peace, Pope John Paul II has suggested we recall that 2003 marks the 40th anniversary of the groundbreaking Encyclical of his predecessor, the Beloved Blessed Pope John XXIII, a letter entitled, *Peace on Earth* or in the Latin *Pacem in Terris*. In that 1963 letter, written just two months before the Holy Father died, he offered his last will and testament to the world community. He stated the following insightful words: "*Peace on earth... can be firmly established and sustained only if the order laid down by God is dutifully observed.*"

Pope John XXIII then went on to identify four pillars of peace: *Truth, Justice, Love, and Freedom*. He notes that truth is necessary as the first building block toward peace – truth about the dignity of human beings, recognizing each person's rights and responsibilities. According to the second pillar, justice, we use our skills to respect human rights and fulfill our duties. In love, the third pillar, we go beyond justice as we freely share with others all that which we have received and which they genuinely need. Finally, in true freedom, the fourth pillar, we take responsibility for our actions, using those means that are rooted in truth and our concern for others.

The road to peace, therefore, truly begins by recognizing that our human rights flow from a reality which supercedes any one of us. Rights are not simply conferred on us by the state or earned by our own efforts; our human rights are gifts of God, implicit in our human nature itself.

And, as our own Declaration of Independence recognizes, the most basic of all those rights is of course, the right to life itself.

Our current Holy Father reminds us that ultimately, peace is not about structures, but about people and respect for the dignity of each person according to the order and plan of our loving creator.

Governor Granholm, as you and all the newly-elected officials begin your terms of office, may you build on the foundation left behind by Governor Engler and his predecessors, and may you work for a healthy common good by building up a culture of peace built on the pillars of truth, justice, love, and freedom. May God truly bless and guide our new first family and all the families of our great state of Michigan, throughout the United States, and all around the world! Amen.