



The Identity of Catholic Universities

Throughout the history of the Church, including today amidst persecution in the Middle East, we have had those inspiring witnesses who stand fast in the faith and resolutely proclaim, “I am Christian,” even knowing that they will be condemned. It is no less important for the institutions of the Church such as universities and social ministries, as it is for individuals, to offer this testimony of their Catholic identity.

In particular, Catholic institutions of higher learning play a special role in the Church and in the wider society. Growing out of the heart of the Church, a Catholic university exists to provide not only an academically excellent education, but also a structured context where students can encounter and experience the transcendent truth and love of Jesus Christ.

Jesus came to tell us of a truly good, wholesome and right way to live. He taught us that we are made in the image and likeness of God, that there is a God-given plan to human living and that we are all responsible for each other and responsive to God’s law. The Catholic university provides a unique forum where this Good News can be explored, more deeply understood and lived. If the moral climate and ethical texture of a Catholic university is no different than any secular institution of higher education, it loses its claim to distinctiveness and the label “Catholic” becomes simply a reference to an earlier era.

Faith in God’s word – and an identity rooted in that word – lead Catholics to a distinct appraisal of the meaning, value and orientation of life and therefore how they should live. And they will necessarily look at things like human sexuality,

human dignity and marriage in a very different way than people who do not share the same faith and reading of creation and human nature. A Catholic university brings to the discussion a vision rooted in the Gospel that necessarily challenges other ways of life.

“The wider community benefits from the presence of authentically Catholic institutions and faithful Catholic disciples because the richness of Catholic teaching can engage the secular culture in a way that the light of the wisdom of God is brought to bear on the issues of the day” (Being Catholic Today: Catholic Identity Today in an Age of Challenge, 14). Conversely, students, faculty, and the community at large are all impoverished, not enriched, when the institution’s Catholic identity is diluted or called into question by seemingly approving of ideas that are contrary to moral truth.

For example, the Second Vatican Council, charged with renewing the life of the Church in our time, noted in its pastoral document on engaging with the modern world that whatever is opposed to life itself, such as abortion or suicide, or otherwise insults human dignity is an infamy that poisons human society (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27). Thus, it is neither authentically Catholic nor within the Catholic tradition for a university to provide a special platform to those voices that promote or support such counter values.

In our present culture, we have seen an antagonism against Catholic teaching. It is precisely in these times that Catholic institutions of higher learning are called to continual self-examination to ensure an authentic Catholic identity.

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CATHOLIC STANDARD

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON • MARCH 10, 2016

Editorial:

For Georgetown University, an unworthy speaking invitation

Recently it was reported that the Lecture Fund – a student-run organization at Georgetown University – invited the president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund to speak at the university. The university insists that this is a matter of student autonomy and free speech, although the same student organization is selective in what it accepts for discussion and whom they invite.

Giving a forum to the head of a group that is the nation's largest facilitator of abortion and that this past year has been embroiled in a controversy over some of its officials casually discussing the sale of the body parts of aborted fetuses, is antithetical to the mission and Catholic identity of Georgetown University, the nation's first Catholic university, which was founded in 1789.

As the Archdiocese of Washington noted in its statement on this matter, the invitation by a Georgetown University-sanctioned student organization reflects on the part of its membership what appears to be a lack of any understanding of morality, ethics and human decency that one expects on a campus that asserts its Jesuit and Catholic history and identity.

It may be that Georgetown is committed to free speech and the exchange of ideas, yet it would surely not offer a speaking invitation to a provocative figure known for anti-Semitic or racist or anti-gay or misogynistic views.

Welcoming an ardent supporter of the violent taking of an unborn human life is deeply offensive and heart-rending to other Georgetown students, teachers, alumni and community members who believe in the Catholic teaching that all human life has God-given dignity from conception to natural death. Apparently to some, the one group of people that it is acceptable to offend, even at a Catholic university, are Catholics.

Pope Francis has warned of a "throwaway culture" that despoils our planet and denigrates the human dignity of the unborn, the sick and the frail elderly. During his visit to Washington last fall, Pope Francis through his words while addressing Congress and through his actions immediately afterward visiting Catholic Charities and embracing the homeless offered an unforgettable testimony to respecting human life. The invitation by Georgetown's Lecture Fund to have the leader of Planned Parenthood speak on campus sends the opposite message, and casts a shadow of what St. John Paul II called "the culture of death" on this venerable institution.

Let us pray that this regrettable incident might renew efforts at Georgetown to re-assert its Catholic identity, to build what that holy pope called a "civilization of life and love" at that campus, and that the light of faith at Georgetown might dispel the darkness that this situation casts on its reputation.

CATHOLIC STANDARD

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON • MARCH 30, 2016

Editorial:

At Georgetown, it's values not free speech at issue

Predictably, a recent editorial in *The Hoya*, the Georgetown University student newspaper, defended as a free speech issue the controversial decision to invite Planned Parenthood's president to address students on campus. The Archdiocese of Washington never framed its criticism of the action by the student-run Lecture Fund in those terms. Indeed, the archdiocese has long defended and promoted the freedoms of the First Amendment, most recently in its challenge to the Obama Administration's HHS mandate, which is an attempt by the government to define religion and separate its worship from its ministries by requiring some Catholic institutions to provide employee health insurance coverage of abortion-inducing drugs, contraceptives and sterilization procedures, which violate Church teaching.

The real issue is the invitation itself, and what it says about the values and priorities of some of the students at the nation's oldest Catholic and Jesuit-run university, and their lack of respect for Georgetown's identity and mission.

The Hoya's editorial states, "We hold the position that allowing free speech is not the same as endorsing that speech, and that hosting a speaker is not the same as validating that speaker." That point was echoed in an earlier statement from Georgetown University on the controversy, which noted, "We respect our students' right to express their personal views and are committed to sustaining a forum for the free exchange of ideas, even when those ideas may be difficult, controversial or objectionable to some."

As the Archdiocese of Washington made clear in its statement on this matter, framing this around the issues of student autonomy and free speech misses the key point: The invitation by the student group to the head of Planned Parenthood to speak on campus does not reflect what should be an "environment of morality, ethics and human decency that one expects on a campus that asserts its Jesuit and Catholic history and identity."

Catholic teaching recognizes the truth of abortion as a great moral evil that involves the killing of human life and as an affront to all human dignity. Planned Parenthood is the nation's largest facilitator of abortions; its annual report claims that the organization in fiscal year 2014 committed 327,653 abortions in the United States. To invite its leader to speak at a Catholic institution is akin to students at an historically black university inviting a white supremacist, or a women's college inviting a misogynist, or a Jewish institution inviting an anti-Semite or Holocaust denier. The invitation is especially offensive considering that in this past year, the organization has been embroiled in a controversy involving some of its officials being videotaped casually discussing the sale of body parts from the aborted unborn.

Georgetown's Speech and Expression Policy notes that

"expression that is indecent or is grossly obscene or grossly offensive on matters such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation is inappropriate in a university community..." Yet, as we've noted before, Georgetown's Catholic students, faculty, alumni and community members who believe in the Church's teaching about the God-given dignity of all human life from conception to natural death, apparently constitute the one group of people whom it is acceptable to offend, even at a Catholic university.

Inviting the head of such an organization to a Catholic university raises the question of why students there would not only tolerate the "choice" of such an evil, but also why they would provide a forum for an outspoken abortion advocate. Is Georgetown University's Lecture Fund, as it describes itself, truly a "non-partisan student-run organization that exists to enrich the academic experience of the Georgetown community" and "strives to bring speakers to campus to enlighten, educate, and occasionally, entertain," or does it sometimes serve the purpose of promoting views that oppose and undermine Catholic teaching? One also must wonder whether many Georgetown students respect or are even aware of the school's Catholic and Jesuit identity, and this situation calls for soul searching among Georgetown's Jesuit community and administrators about students' priorities in a world where vulnerable human life is increasingly being threatened.

The role of any university, but especially one that calls itself "Catholic," is to lead people toward truth. When engaging in dialogue in the marketplace of ideas, far from fostering a climate of relativism which does not acknowledge objective truth and suggests that all ideas, such as those espoused by Planned Parenthood, are equal, a Catholic university has a solemn obligation in truth and love to speak out against objective evils and reinforce its Catholic identity.

As with faith and reason, these two aspects – open intellectual dialogue and truth – are not in opposition with each other. Georgetown's Catholic identity should help all of its students, regardless of their faith or even if they have no faith, to respect human life and dignity in all its stages and to stand up for it whenever it is threatened, and also to respect the mission of Georgetown as a Catholic university.

The speaking invitation by the Lecture Fund says something that should be very troubling for Georgetown's Jesuit community and its administration, faculty, alumni and student body: among some students – perhaps many – there exists a values system that regards the university's Catholic identity – and human life itself – with either indifference, disrespect or contempt, and beyond members of the school's pro-life group, it seems that few other people on campus seem willing to admit it, let alone address it.

CATHOLIC STANDARD

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON • APRIL 14, 2016

Editorial:

Georgetown's leaders tout free speech, remain silent on abortion

The campus newsmagazine *Georgetown Voice* has now joined in what is becoming an ever widening discussion regarding the invitation of the president of Planned Parenthood to campus in its article, "Soul Searching: Navigating Georgetown's Catholic Identity."

Like the student newspaper, *The Hoya*, before it, the *Voice* has essentially framed the issue in terms of free speech, while also mistakenly stating that the Archdiocese of Washington had insisted that the University reconsider the invitation, giving the impression that it sought to stifle free speech. Father Kevin O'Brien, S.J., Georgetown's Vice President for Mission and Ministry, is quoted supporting this assertion, saying, "We trust in that free exchange of ideas. The truth will prevail when those ideas are tested."

In fact, there is no challenge or test. The Archdiocese did not urge a reconsideration of the invitation and it does not fear genuine, good faith dialogue in the marketplace of ideas. What the Archdiocese and many others are concerned about is that the invitation to Planned Parenthood reveals some of the values held and even nurtured on campus. At this particular event, Planned Parenthood's view is the only one being presented by the Lecture Fund, without any acknowledgement of objective human values that should be presented in any authentic search for truth. The selection of speakers in itself speaks to the values of those issuing the invitation. This choice of values that is displayed on campus, including, lamentably, the *Voice's* story which so substantially highlights those who support abortion or oppose Catholic teaching, does not speak well of the school or the values it conveys to its students.

As the Archdiocese said in its March 7 statement, "What we lament and find sadly lacking in this choice by the student group is any reflection of what should be an environment of morality, ethics and human decency that one expects on a campus that asserts its Jesuit and Catholic history and identity."

The issue of Georgetown's invitation to Planned Parenthood is not a free speech issue. It is a Catholic identity issue, as the *Voice* recognizes in asserting, "What is necessary now is to investigate what it really means to be a Catholic university."

As a Catholic university, Georgetown cannot simply foster

an atmosphere where every idea, argument or presentation is accepted with equal weight. It is expected to lead its students toward objective truth, and in this case, Georgetown and its administration have the solemn obligation in truth and love to speak out against the objective evil that is abortion.

The invitation for the president of Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest organized provider of processes to kill unborn children, to speak at a Catholic institution is akin to students at an historically black university inviting a white supremacist, or a women's college inviting a misogynist, or a Jewish institution inviting an anti-Semite or Holocaust denier. The rejection of such speakers is not a question of free speech but a question of the values of the institution, its administration, faculty and students.

One wonders if Father O'Brien's position would also oblige Georgetown University to accept on campus lectures and programs presented by a white supremacist or misogynist or anti-Semite. Yet, this Catholic institution and its leadership deem it acceptable to invite a speaker whose views clearly support, encourage and seek to foster the destruction of innocent human life in the womb – an affront to Catholic teaching.

This also raises questions about the students, themselves: Why are students seemingly tolerant – even accepting – of abortion, the taking of another human life? And why would they provide a forum for an outspoken abortion advocate whose organization is responsible for the deaths of more than 250,000 unborn children every year?

Sometimes, intentionally or not, an institution's values are reflected more in their actions than their words. As the *Voice* notes in its extensive article, there are many groups on campus with diverse views, but the magazine did not quote one of them – or a member of the administration or a faculty adviser, for that matter – clearly calling abortion what it is – a grave, moral evil.

Thankfully, some student groups on the Georgetown campus have spoken out in defense of life and are holding programs next week to reinforce that message. If only the University itself, from the start, had shown equal witness to human dignity and the value of all human life.



Keeping the Faith on Campus

As Archbishop, I am blessed to make pastoral visits and celebrate the Eucharist at our parishes and Catholic schools, and also see firsthand the impact of our other institutions that reflect Christ's love to this community through our charitable, health care and educational outreach.

Today I will be visiting the Catholic Student Center at the University of Maryland (UMD) and celebrating Mass with the students there. On college campuses and whenever I encounter Catholic young adults at parishes and diocesan events, I am truly inspired by the emergence of a youthful generation whose faith is refreshingly vibrant. These young women and men provide hope to us all for the future – and those students at secular universities such as Maryland or George Washington University who proudly live their Catholic faith provide a special inspiration and laudable example to the students who attend our Catholic universities.

In a world and in academic settings where views contrary to faith are often so evident, these Catholic college students enrich others by speaking up for Gospel values, participating in the sacraments, serving the community, studying the Bible together and taking part in programs where they learn more about Catholic teaching, and also by joining each other at social and recreational events. They are rightly enthusiastic in their Catholic identity, knowing that it is only in the truth and love of Jesus Christ that the problems of the world can be solved, and so they desire to more fully to live the faith.

The Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington has an inspiring exhibit on the life of that holy pastor, and one gallery shows him going

on camping trips and outings with college students when he was a priest in his native Poland, with a pair of his skis and tennis shoes displayed nearby. His devotion to bringing Jesus to young people later reached a global scale when he became Pope and inaugurated World Youth Day. That same exhibit highlights those gatherings includes a quote to young people attending World Youth Day at Toronto in 2002: “You are the men and women of tomorrow. The future is in your hearts and in your hands.”

Over the years, millions of young adults and teen-agers from around the globe would joyously celebrate World Youth Day with Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. The next worldwide gathering will be in July in Kraków, Poland, the city of Saint John Paul II and Saint Faustina Kowalska, the “apostle of Divine Mercy,” and the theme will be: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). Locally, for those who would like to participate but cannot make the trip, on July 30 the archdiocese is co-hosting “Kraków in the Capital” on the campus of The Catholic University of America for a day-long World Youth Day stateside experience.

Whenever I visit and pray with Catholic young adults at events such as this or at our local universities, I find hope-filled enthusiasm. Sometimes I have the opportunity to join them for a meal afterward, and hear about their faith journeys. At one such previous visit to the UMD Catholic Student Center, a young woman told me how friends had invited her to join them at Mass, and she felt so much at home that she decided to join the

Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil.

Outreach to Catholic students at Maryland's flagship university began in 1933 and the Catholic Student Center recently marked its 50th anniversary of serving students there. The center's logo shows the Maryland Terrapin with a halo, with that cartoon turtle offering a joyful reminder of the witness of faith that this campus ministry has offered to generations of students. Many of those graduates have gone on to serve our communities, our country and our Church in countless ways through their professions and their outreach. Others have answered the call to religious life and priesthood. Indeed, in recent years I have had the privilege of ordaining several new priests who were once "Catholic Terps" at the University of Maryland.

How fitting it was, that when Pope Francis offered his historic address to Congress last fall, he

made a special point of noting our nation's "young people who are working to realize their great and noble aspirations." It was fitting too that at the Canonization Mass for Saint Junípero Serra, where those assembled included many students from area college campuses, the Holy Father should encourage people to emulate the missionary spirit of that new saint: "So let us go out, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ!"

Offering the richness of an encounter with the life, love and truth of Jesus is something that our Catholic college students are bringing to their campuses and to our world. In this way, the students become the teachers, and their unapologetic expression of faith is something we can all learn from.

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ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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NEWS RELEASE

Monday, March 7, 2016

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Statement of Archdiocese of Washington on Georgetown University

Recently it was reported that the Lecture Fund – a student-run organization at Georgetown University – had invited the president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Planned Parenthood Action Fund to speak at the university. The university insists that this is a matter of student autonomy and free speech, although the same student organization is selective in what it accepts for discussion and whom they invite.

In any case, this is not our issue here. What we lament and find sadly lacking in this choice by the student group is any reflection of what should be an environment of morality, ethics and human decency that one expects on a campus that asserts its Jesuit and Catholic history and identity.

One would prefer to see some recognition by this student group of the lives and ministry, focus and values of people like Blessed Óscar Romero, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta and Pope Francis in place of that group's seemingly constant preoccupation with sexual activity, contraception and abortion. The Archdiocese of Washington is always open and ready to dialogue with the students, faculty and administration of the University on issues of such significance.

The apparent unawareness of those pushing the violence of abortion and the denigration of human dignity that there are other human values and issues being challenged in the world lends credence to the perception of the "ivory tower" life of some on campus. This unfortunately does not speak well for the future. One would hope to see this generation of Georgetown graduates have a far less self-absorbed attitude when facing neighbors and those in need, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Perhaps those so interested in learning more about the killing of unborn babies and disrespect for the dignity of all human life might take a look at the recent *America* magazine issue that speaks at length about the extent of violence and persecution the people of faith around the world suffer. It would be beneficial for these Georgetown University students to learn more about these serious problems in the world.

The contribution to a better world today can take inspiration from the Gospel and its proponents such as Pope Francis and from the Jubilee Year of Mercy rather than from the organized efforts to facilitate the violent destruction of unborn children.

The Jesuit community on campus clearly has its work cut out for it and a long way to go as it tries to instill at Georgetown some of the values of Pope Francis. Until then it is hard wholeheartedly to share in the cry, "Go Hoyas!"

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Epiphany Parish
Washington, D.C.
Thursday, April 21, 2016
7:30 p.m.

UNIVERSITY MASS FOR LIFE

HOMILY
by
His Eminence
Cardinal Donald Wuerl
Archbishop of Washington

As I begin these reflections, I want to thank Father Adam Park, Pastor of this Parish and also Chaplain to the Catholic faculty and students at George Washington University, for arranging this opportunity to celebrate the University Mass for Life in which we give thanks to God for the gift of human life.

The Liturgy speaks to us. At every Mass the Word of God is announced so that we can hear that Word and seek to have it form our lives. What does God say to us? What does the Word of God, announced in this Liturgy, say to us tonight?

Some of that Word is addressed explicitly to you, the young people, the university students who are at the heart of this University Mass for Life. God says to you as he did to the Prophet Jeremiah, "Do not say I am too young, I do not know how to speak." Do not say, I am not sure how I should voice my support for unborn children. Because the Lord says to the Prophet Jeremiah, "See I place my words in your mouth!"

The second reading tells us why those words are so important. Saint Paul writing to the Romans, then and to us now, says, "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."

Yes, there is a powerful political correctness movement, emphasis, perspective, environment and force all around us. It says to set aside such things as the value of human life and substitute the politically correct position that you should be free to choose to kill unborn children. But the Word of God comes to us to say, "Do not conform yourself to this age."

And finally, in the Gospel, Jesus tells us in response to the question of the young man, "What must I do to gain eternal life?" "Keep the commandments." And these include "You shall not kill."

Once, some years ago, I was at a hearing that involved a number of community leaders, political, law enforcement, educational and Church. One of the young at risk people, about 14 years old, was asked by one of the people on the advisory board, "Why is it that you act so violently towards other people?" (the young man was in custody for having shot and gravely injured another young person) His response was, "How come you get to draw the line?" His inference was clear to everybody in the room.

For two generations our culture has been saying it is perfectly alright to kill unborn children, it is perfectly alright to take the life of someone else if that someone is inconvenient to you. His question was, “How come you get to draw the line?”

We are here tonight because we share a very different view of life one that recognizes it as a gift from God. Life is something we embrace and cherish.

During Pope Francis’ visit to Washington, one of the most striking images was how the Holy Father’s love radiated whether he was greeting a head of state or a homeless person. His gestures, his words, his actions in every encounter proclaimed the truth that every life is worth living. As a gift from God, every human life from conception to death is sacred. It is this fundamental truth the Pope so convincingly communicates.

Tonight we gather to say that every life is worth living. In a special way, we are invited to reflect on the ways we can give witness to the dignity of every human life. “In many places, quality of life is related primarily to economic means, to ‘well-being,’ to the beauty and enjoyment of the physical, forgetting other more profound dimensions of existence – interpersonal, spiritual and religious,” observes Pope Francis. “In fact, in the light of faith and right reason, human life is always sacred and always ‘of quality.’ There is no human life that is more sacred than another – every human life is sacred.” (Address of November 15, 2014).

As a sacred gift entrusted to us, we are responsible for working to protect and preserve this life until it ends naturally, until the time that God alone appoints for our departure. Of course, since the time of Cain that gift of life has been brutally violated and violently taken away. Yet never has the responsibility to protect and preserve life been more difficult than in our day, either in our private personal lives or a social scale, given the assaults on life from widespread murder, war, abortion, suicide, euthanasia, and more, including the prospect of medicalized death from those whose profession exists to help save life, not take it.

Pope Francis has spoken often about a widespread cultural mentality that enslaves the hearts of so many today, a mindset where what is valued the least is human life, especially if the person is physically or socially weaker. That is why concern for human life in its totality is a real priority for the Church, he told a group of healthcare providers. There is a need to unreservedly say “yes” to life, he said, especially with respect to the most vulnerable – the disabled, the sick, the newborn, children, the elderly, “even if he is ill or at the end of his days, [he] bears the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded, as the ‘culture of waste’ suggests! They cannot be thrown away!”

At a time when many in society tend to judge a person’s worth on an obscure and subjective “quality of life” scale, we are convinced that human dignity is not based on productivity or usefulness, and dignity is not destroyed during times of hardship or even great suffering. Created by God, made in his image, each and every person is endowed with inherent dignity.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not be deceived by the politically correct rhetoric that uses words to hide the true meaning. Those that favor killing the unborn child often speak of, “the product of conception” as opposed to “the unborn child.” They speak about “facilitating the conclusion of the life cycle” instead of “assisting a suicide.” So it is with choice. When you use the word “choice” you have to complete the sentence. What is it you choose?

Are you allowed to choose to smoke in the University cafeteria, are you allowed to choose to park your car wherever you want without consequences, are manufacturers free to present food without telling you its content and especially its calorie count?

The word “choice” is a smokescreen behind which those killing unborn children take refuge. Every chance you get, blow that smoke away.

Do not ever be convinced by the rhetoric of liberation that killing unborn, innocent children is in any way similar to the great social justice struggles that our nation has faced – many times enlightened by the Church’s social teaching. Whether it was the fight against slavery, racial discrimination, or unjust working conditions, the Church’s proclamation of the dignity of all human life was the center.

Do not let anyone reduce for you the greatness of the American dream to the level of free contraceptives.

To realize, respect and foster human life, or any form of goodness, is to glorify the Creator of all persons and to honor his transcendent and creative goodness.

One last image I would like to leave with you as you valiantly continue your support for life in all of its many wonderful manifestations including the unborn child.

Some years ago, I visited one of our mission efforts in South America that included a maternity hospital. In the special section was a two day old baby whose mother had left him with the sisters because she was not able to care for the baby. She said she hoped the sisters would find a good home for the infant. A sister said to me, “You can pick up the baby. You will not hurt it. He is not that fragile.”

It was only when I went to put the baby back into its little crib that I realized how strong even an infant’s grip can be. He had latched on to my finger and was holding on tightly. It was as if he was saying, “Please, do not let me go. Please, do not let me alone. Please, somebody care for me.”

My brothers and sisters, what you are doing this evening is responding to the call of many, many unborn children. Please, be there for me. Please, do not let me go. Please, speak up for me.

May God bless you and remember what the Lord said to you through the Prophet Jeremiah, “To whomever I send you, you shall go and you shall speak.”

April 21, 2016