

## Boehner invites Pope Francis to speak to Congress

Pam Cohen | Mar. 13, 2014 NCR Today

House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) reached out to the Vatican on behalf of House and Senate leaders on Thursday to invite Pope Francis to speak to both houses of Congress should he come to the United States next year, [The Washington Post reports](#) [1].

A copy of the letter:

It is with reverence and admiration that I have invited Pope Francis, as head of state of the Holy See and the first Pope to hail from the Americas, to address a joint meeting of the United States Congress.

Pope Francis has inspired millions of Americans with his pastoral manner and servant leadership, challenging all people to lead lives of mercy, forgiveness, solidarity, and humble service.

His tireless call for the protection of the most vulnerable among us -- the ailing, the disadvantaged, the unemployed, the impoverished, the unborn -- has awakened hearts on every continent.

His social teachings, rooted in 'the joy of the gospel,' have prompted careful reflection and vigorous dialogue among people of all ideologies and religious views in the United States and throughout a rapidly changing world, particularly among those who champion human dignity, freedom, and social justice.

These principles are among the fundamentals of the American Idea. And though our nation sometimes fails to live up to these principles, at our best we give them new life as we seek the common good. Many in the United States believe these principles are undermined by 'crony capitalism' and the ongoing centralization of political power in the institutions of our federal government, which threaten to disrupt the delicate balance between the twin virtues of subsidiarity and solidarity. They have embraced Pope Francis' reminder that we cannot meet our responsibility to the poor with a welfare mentality based on business calculations. We can meet it only with personal charity on the one hand and sound, inclusive policies on the other.

The Holy Father's pastoral message challenges people of all faiths, ideologies and political parties. His address as a visiting head of state before a joint meeting of the House and Senate would honor our nation in keeping with the best traditions of our democratic institutions. It would also offer an excellent opportunity for the American people as well as the nations of the world to hear his message in full.

It is with deep gratitude that I have asked Pope Francis to consider this open invitation on behalf of the Congress and the millions of citizens of the United States we serve.

House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) released a statement Thursday to add her support of the plan to Boehner's, the *Post* reports. Boehner and Pelosi are both Catholic.

[Pope Francis expressed his intention to visit Philadelphia](#) [2] for the September 2015 World Meeting of Families, though the date is still too far away for the trip to be a certainty.

But that hasn't stopped some American Catholics from extending an invite.

Green Bay, Wis., Mayor Jim Schmitt sent a letter to Francis last month, inviting the pope to visit the city for the nearby Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion, the only approved Marian apparition site in the United States, [Catholic News Service reported](#) [3]. The mayor's office even [has a website where supporters of the plan can sign an online petition](#) [4].

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[1] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/03/13/pope-francis-invited-to-address-a-joint-session-of-congress/>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/node/68836>

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[4] <http://www.popetogreenbay.com/>