

**The International Republican Institute
2005 Freedom Dinner and Award Ceremony
Honoring George W. Bush and Pope John Paul II
Wednesday, May 18, 2005
Award Presentations, by Senator McCain**

(Presentation to President Bush)

Thank you, thank you very much, thank you, thank you very much. I'd like to thank John Thain for serving as this year's dinner chairman, thanks in large part to John's extraordinary efforts while he was in the middle of a challenging project with his day job. This is the most successful IRI dinner ever. I owe him, we all owe him, the cause of freedom owes him a personal debt of gratitude.

At every annual dinner we honor an individual of great distinction. This year, our gathering is a distinction in its own right, as we're privileged to have with us a truly extraordinary guest of honor – never before has a sitting American president graced IRI's annual dinner, and so for his presence alone, we are grateful.

But more than that, for an organization whose staff and volunteers work so selflessly to help the people of other countries claim their right to live with dignity, George W. Bush is not just any president. He has become the world statesman; more than any other, he's dedicated his presidency to securing the success of liberty abroad.

The mission of IRI and its allies to foster liberty in lands unblessed by freedom, under this President, has become more than ever America's mission, and has become a hallmark of America's foreign policy. Because this President knows that the promotion of democracy serves are our security interests and is inseparable from the moral foundation of our national character. He understands that the desire for freedom is not a function of culture, religion or geography, from Ukraine to Kyrgyzstan, Iraq to Afghanistan, Lebanon to Egypt to Palestine, freedoms that were once the privilege of a few are now claimed as the right of all people.

There remains much work ahead. In Burma, a brutal military junta uses violence and repression to hold captive an entire population, while an incomparably courageous woman, Aung San Suu Kyi, remains in detention. In Sudan, genocide continues to rage throughout the state of Darfur. Russia, Belarus and several of the Central Asian nations appear to be moving backward, not forward, on the path to democracy, and throughout the broader Middle East where one party is the norm, lack of freedom engenders extremism and calamity.

We need not despair in the face of these challenges; we may hope for the best, because we're hopeful people, and because we have a president who dares to work for the best. He works to achieve a safer, freer, better world - a world in which governments are chosen, not imposed, a world where freedoms are embraced, not abridged, a world in which there is justice and opportunity for all, not rights and riches for some.

In his second inaugural address, the President movingly promised that all who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know, the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.

Years ago the President and I were once opponents. Now it is my privilege and honor to stand with him, in the great and noble work he has undertaken. Like all of you, and like all who believe in our good cause, I am indebted to and very proud of our honoree. It's my great honor to present the 2005 Freedom Award to our President and my friend, George W. Bush.

(Posthumous Presentation to Pope John Paul II)

It's now my privilege to present the other IRI Freedom Award to a true giant of the 20th century, and he passed away earlier this year, Pope John Paul II. He left behind a world fundamentally changed because of his presence, a course of history altered by his labors.

In many ways John Paul II was a study in opposites, having lived through dehumanizing communism at home, he bravely stood up for the rights of individuals. As the most powerful man in the world's largest church, he bent humbly each year to wash the feet of 12 priests.

Reflecting daily on the divine, he had an astonishing humanity that led him to forgive even his would-be assassin. And as the first Polish Pope in history, he was both a patriot who loved his homeland, and a citizen of the world. In the first days of his papacy it was clear where the Pope stood in the battle between freedom and oppression. Traveling to his homeland just months after his inauguration, he challenged the people of that captive land, you are men, he told the assembled crowds, you have dignity, don't crawl on your bellies.

The Pope went on to embrace Lech Walesa and Solidarity, infusing this movement with great weight and authority. He stood up for fundamental human rights across the globe, and rejected the Communist system that so plainly subverted them. He brought his message to people of all continents, race and distinctions of race or nationality, and he rejected the relativism that so often serves as a dictator's last excuse for oppression.

In short, the world is a better place – freer, more humane, more joyful – because of Pope John Paul II's role in it. To give a sense of John Paul's remarkable accomplishments, we have with us tonight a man who knows of what he speaks. Michael Novak, the George Frederick Jewett scholar in religion, philosophy, and public policy at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of no less than 25 books on philosophy and theology. His latest work is entitled *The Universal Hunger for Liberty* a phrase which I believe the recently departed Pope would find deeply attractive.

But before we hear from Mr. Novak, we are honored to have with us Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, who will accept the Freedom Award on behalf of the Pope. Cardinal McCarrick is himself a great advocate of human rights, religious freedom, and other liberties, and he has traveled the world to promote these causes. It is most fitting then, to have him accept an award

for the most humane of men, Pope John Paul II. We have here tonight one of his deputies, a man who finds his life's work in the concerns of all humanity, Cardinal McCarrick.