

Press Release...



FROM THE OFFICE OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE LA SHAWN K. FORD

For Immediate Release:
September 25, 2015

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Welcome, Pope Francis!

WASHINGTON, DC – As state Representative La Shawn K. Ford, D-Chicago, joined others to welcome Pope Francis at the White House on Wednesday and witnessed the first address of a Pope to the United States Congress on Thursday, Ford has these remarks:

“As a Roman Catholic who once studied to be a Catholic priest, I have been excited since Pope Francis took over as the leader of the one billion Roman Catholics in the world,” said Ford. “I have also been hopeful that he would challenge the leaders of the church and her followers to be stronger voices for fairness and justice in the world.”

“The many problems in the world today are the result of evil and hate amongst humanity, said Ford. “The Catholic Church has a moral obligation and responsibility to teach about and then confront hate and evil. The Church must also be united with other faiths to fight for equality and justice, praying for a better world.”

In speaking of safeguarding our planet, Pope Francis said, “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change,” also noted in his recent Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*.

Of the 1 billion Catholics in the world, 25% are of African descent, and 3 million are African Americans. With 69.4 million members, the American Catholic Church is the largest religious body in the United States, comprising 22% of the population.

“It was an honor to be one of 11,000 standing and waiting for 4 hours on a beautiful morning at the White House, as the President and Mrs. Obama welcomed His Holiness Pope Francis of the Holy See,” said Ford. “President Obama stood tall, with pride, and with his chin up, while the Pope stood humbly with his head down.”

“It was also an honor to be the guest of Congressman Danny K. Davis in the U.S. House of Representatives as the pope addressed an historic joint session of Congress,” said Ford. “In his address, the Pope said these words to challenge all of society, regardless of one’s faith or beliefs, to remember to try to live by the Golden Rule: ‘Let us remember the Golden Rule: ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ (Mt 7:12). This Rule points us in a clear direction. Let us treat others with the same passion and compassion with which we want to be treated. Let us seek for others the same possibilities which we seek for ourselves. Let us help others to grow, as we would like to be helped ourselves. In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities. The yardstick we use for others will be the yardstick which time will use for us.”

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“This reminds me of being my brother’s/sister’s keeper,” said Ford. “The Pope’s outgoing leadership shows him to be a moral leader with a conscience, working to make the world a better place for all. After all, less evil and hate make it easier to be a Catholic following Christ. It is my hope that while the Pope is spreading the Good News in America that he challenge the consciences of all people to work for, among many things, a fairer system so we may educate children in America equally. Opportunities for a high quality education that is equal and is proven to meet the needs of our children will help to eliminate much evil and hate.”

“Pope Francis message of social justice was a message of hope, love, justice, and opportunity for the American people,” said Ford. “He urged us to fight to improve society for the common good. I was moved and renewed as a Catholic and as a State Representative by the pope's message to continue fighting for justice, not just for charity for the needy. It is my hope that Illinois' Budget impasse ends for the common good of all Illinoisans.

For more information, contact one of Ford’s constituent service offices: 816 S. Oak Park Avenue in Oak Park at [708-445-3673](tel:708-445-3673), 4800 W. Chicago Avenue in Chicago at [773-378-5902](tel:773-378-5902) or in the Stratton Office Building in Springfield at [217-782-5962](tel:217-782-5962), or visit www.lashawnford.com.

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