

**Statement of Joseph S. Donnelly**  
**Nominee to be U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See**  
**U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**December 14, 2021**

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and Distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to appear before you. I am honored to have been nominated to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, and I thank President Biden and Secretary Blinken for their confidence in me.

I want to thank my wife Jill for her support and help and friendship throughout this journey: our daughter Molly, her husband Mike, and their daughter Josephine; son Joe Jr., and his wife Jesseca; my sisters and brother; and so many friends who have touched my life over the years.

I want to thank the people of Indiana for having given me the chance to represent them in the United States House of Representatives and in the United States Senate. I felt privileged to have that opportunity, and to have such examples to model myself after as my mom, dad, and second mom Joan, Father Ted Hesburgh, the former President of the University of Notre Dame, mentors like Congressman John Brademas from my former Congressional District, and Senate giants like Richard Lugar and Birch Bayh of Indiana, whose legacy was caring, duty, competence, and love of country.

I believe my service in the House and Senate has helped prepare me for this posting to represent the United States. If confirmed, I will work with the representatives of the Holy See to make progress on the critical issues facing our country and the world. If confirmed, I plan to bring the same public service ethic, collaborative mindset, and focus on delivering for the American people that defined my time in Congress to the task of expanding and deepening our partnership with the Holy See.

The Holy See is unique among states, with an influence that reaches across the globe. More than 1.3 billion Catholics worldwide – and millions of non-Catholics as well – take inspiration from Pope Francis' leadership. Additionally, hundreds of Catholic-affiliated NGOs, charities, religious orders, and lay organizations provide healthcare and education, build peace, and make personal connections with people in every part of the world. The United States and the Holy See have had formal diplomatic relations since 1984, but our relationship runs much deeper than that,

back to the very founding of our country when George Washington dispatched our first envoy to the Papal States in 1797. If confirmed, I see three core priorities:

**First, promoting peace and security.** If confirmed, my foremost priority will always be the safety and security of Americans, including the personnel and family members assigned to Embassy Vatican. But our shared interest in promoting peace and stability extends much further. Vatican diplomats and Catholic organizations serve as effective mediators to end conflicts, promote peace, and advocate for the release of political prisoners. If confirmed, I would seek to strengthen our quiet diplomacy with the Vatican to resolve crises peacefully.

**Second, advancing human rights.** Promoting human rights and human dignity lies at the heart of the U.S.-Holy See partnership. The Holy See is a leader in defending religious freedom and promoting interfaith dialogue. Under Pope Francis' leadership, the Vatican has prioritized efforts to combat human trafficking, and Catholic organizations and religious orders provide essential care and services to human trafficking victims all over the world. Pope Francis has condemned antisemitism and violence against Jews. With threats to human rights rising in many parts of the world, our cooperation with the Vatican is increasingly important.

**Third, tackling the climate crisis.** Pope Francis has been a vocal advocate for protecting the environment and addressing climate change, including through his second encyclical, *Laudato Si'* (*lau-DAH-toh SEE*). Vatican City and Catholic organizations are working hard to implement Pope Francis' climate vision in their own operations by reducing waste and emissions. If confirmed, I look forward to identifying new ways to collaborate with the Holy See to raise global ambitions to tackle the climate crisis.

I would feel fortunate to be part of a team with the incredibly talented individuals who work at the U.S. Embassy to the Holy See, and all the other dedicated folks who serve our beloved country. As a former member of this body, I also eagerly look forward to partnering with Congress to further U.S. priorities with the Holy See. If confirmed, I enthusiastically await engaging Vatican officials, sharing ideas, and deepening our collaboration as we work together to build a brighter future.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.