

23rd Annual Peace Officers' Memorial Service

May 15, 2004

National President Chuck Canterbury's Memorial Speech

Mr. President, Members of Congress, Attorney General Ashcroft. Deputy Secretary Law, Honored Guests, My Fellow Officers, and, most especially, you, the families of those men and women we come here today to honor, it is my honor to welcome you to this 23rd Annual National Peace Officers' Memorial Service.

This service is hosted by the Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police and the Grand Lodge Fraternal Order of Police Auxiliary and is offered as a tribute to your loved ones. I want to take a moment and thank the FOP Auxiliary for the many years of dedicated work that they have performed in making this memorial such a fitting tribute to law enforcement. For 23 years, they have worked year round to ensure that America's Law Enforcement Heroes are not forgotten. Thank you, Aliza.

Mr. President, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge your efforts in supporting Law Enforcement and their families. Thank you, sir.

In these times, I would also be remiss if I did not call on all Americans to pray for the safety of our troops who are in harm's way. May God Bless and keep our Troops safe.

President Ronald Reagan said:

The United States remains the last best hope for a mankind plagued by tyranny and deprivation. America is no stronger than its people—and that means you and me. Well, I believe in you, and I believe that if we work together then one day we will say, "We fought the good fight. We finished the race. We kept the faith." And to our children and our children's children we can say, "We did all that could be done in the brief time that was given to us here on earth."

These words are very appropriate and mirror the feelings that I have here today, standing here in the presence of our President, the Commander in Chief, standing here with my fellow officers, the members of the thin blue line that keep us safe from tyranny, and standing here with you, the families of our fallen heroes.

You know only too well that as President Reagan said: Your loved ones fought the good fight, they finished the race, they kept the faith, and they did all they could while here on earth to make this a better and safer place. There is never an easy way to express the love and admiration that we have for our fellow police officers and this service is one way to show you, the families, that we will never forget, we will always keep the sacrifice that your loved ones paid in our hearts and minds.

In these troubled world times we must all remember that our law enforcement officers protect our greatest gift: Freedom. Freedom is something that many of us take for granted, In January, I had the opportunity to travel to Iraq with Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. and during the trip we witnessed some of the most dedicated and proud American soldiers I have ever met. Their dedication and loyalty to the preservation of Freedom for the Iraqi people was phenomenal and I was proud to be an American. The pride I felt in Iraq is comparable to the pride I have for the work that America's Law Enforcement officers do on a daily basis. Law enforcement is our first line of defense in maintaining our way of life—our quality of life—and it provides us with the knowledge that we will always be free.

It is an honor to be here today with other proud Americans—you, the families of our heroes. These heroes understood the need to stand vigilant against tyranny, to protect our most precious gift, and they gave all to preserve the freedom we all cherish so much.

President Grover Cleveland said, "*Honor lies in honest toil.*" The toil performed by law enforcement officers every day brings honor to our law enforcement family and as I have said many times, I am never more proud to be a police officer than when I stand in the presence of those who have lived, loved, and stood beside us in our daily toil. Our Families.

This annual tribute is not the final tribute, it is a continuation of the respect, admiration and memories we all have for your husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, and friends.

Johann Schiller (A German Poet) said, "*That nation is worthless that will not, with pleasure, venture all for its honor.*" All of those we come to honor today ventured all and have provided the nation a reason to always be proud of their accomplishments.

Mr. President, I want to thank you again for being here today to help us honor our fallen brothers and sisters and for your unwavering support of law enforcement officers.

To you, the families, I say, the Fraternal Order of Police we will never let our fellow citizens forget the price of freedom and we will be ever vigilant in our efforts to provide you with the support and love you so richly deserve.

Thank you.