**Thousands to Attend Watch Parties to Witness Pope Francis’s Address to Congress**

**[Insert Date]**

**[Students/parishioners]** from **[name of institution, location]** will be among the thousands across the country participating in “Pope2Congress” watch parties to witness Pope Francis’s historic address to U.S. Congress on Sept. 24.

The Pope2Congress campaign was created by the Ignatian Solidarity Network to generate excitement about Francis’s address to a joint session of Congress, the first ever by a pope. Individuals and institutions that registered with ISN to host watch parties have received a party-planning toolkit from the organization that includes discussion questions, live-tweeting instructions, giveaway prizes, and even BINGO cards.

More than 150 parties have been registered mostly across North America and as far as Rome, according to ISN program director Kim Miller. She says an estimated 13,500 people are expected to attend parties.

Participants will gather in auditoriums, classrooms, and living rooms to hear Francis speak on a wide range of moral issues, including poverty, the global migrant crisis, environmental issues, and the family.

At the **[name of institution]** in **[location]**, partygoers are planning to hold a group discussion on the themes of Francis’s address immediately following the broadcast. Attendees say they expect to be compelled to action by the Pope’s message of peace and justice. **[Insert quote from an attendee]**

Media observers are watching closely to see what effect the Pope’s visit might have on a Congress of which approximately 30% of members self-identify as Catholic, and nearly 15% attended a Catholic college or university. 55 members of Congress were educated at Jesuit universities or high schools, including House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH), who issued the invitation to Pope Francis to visit Congress.

"Pope Francis's address to Congress will illuminate Catholic social teaching and serve as an invitation to Catholics, members of Congress, and many others to respond to the realities of the world with compassion and a spirit of solidarity,” said ISN executive director Christopher Kerr.

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The Ignatian Solidarity Network (ISN) is a national social justice network inspired by the spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola. ISN was founded in 2004 and is a lay-led 501(c)3 organization working in partnership with Jesuit universities, high schools, and parishes, along with many other Catholic institutions and social justice partners. More information about ISN can be found at: www.ignatiansolidarity.net.