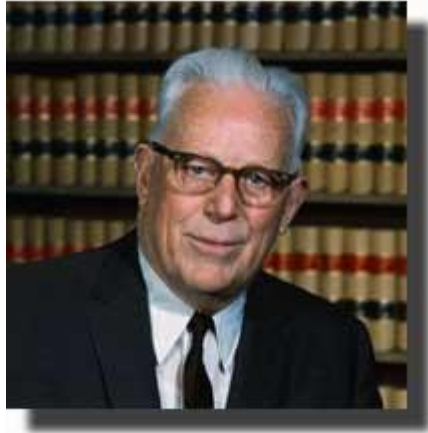




Earl Warren

Eulogy for John F. Kennedy



Delivered 24 November 1963, Rotunda, U.S. Capitol, Washington, D.C

AUTHENTICITY CERTIFIED: Text version below transcribed directly from audio

Mr. President, Mrs. Johnson...members of the Kennedy family, and my fellow Americans:

There are few events in our national life that so unite Americans and so touch the hearts of all of us as the passing of a President of the United States.

There is nothing that adds shock to our sadness more than the assassination of our leader, chosen as he is to embody the ideals of our people, the faith we have in our institutions and our belief in the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

Such misfortunes have befallen the Nation on other occasions, but never more shockingly than two days ago.

We are saddened; we are stunned; we are perplexed.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, a great and good President, the friend of all people of good will, a believer in the dignity and equality of all human beings, a fighter for justice, an apostle of peace, has been snatched from our midst by the bullet of an assassin.

What moved some misguided wretch to do this horrible deed may be never be known to us, but we do know that such acts are commonly stimulated by forces of hatred and malevolence, such as today are eating their way into the bloodstream of American life.



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What a price we pay for this fanaticism.

It has been said that the only thing we learn from history is that we do not learn. But surely we can learn if we have the will to do so. Surely there is a lesson to be learned from this tragic event.

If we really love this country, if we truly love justice and mercy, if we fervently want to make this Nation better for those who are to follow us, we can at least abjure the hatred that consumes people, the false accusations that divide us, and the bitterness that begets violence.

Is it too much to hope that the martyrdom of our beloved President might even soften the hearts of those who would themselves recoil from assassination, but who do not shrink from spreading the venom which kindles thoughts of it in others?

Our Nation is bereaved. The whole world is poorer because of his loss. But we can all be better Americans because John Fitzgerald Kennedy has passed our way, because he has been our chosen leader at a time in history when his character, his vision, and his quiet courage have enabled him to chart a course for us -- a safe course for us, through the shoals of treacherous seas that encompass the world.

And now that he is relieved of the almost superhuman burden we imposed on him, may he rest in peace.