

POOL REPORT # 10

Church Service

February 29, 1976

President Ford arrived at the Church of the Redeemer seven minutes after the 11 am services were scheduled to begin. While waiting for the First Family outside the concrete, ivy-covered Episcopal church, the pastor, Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald said good naturedly "This is the first time we've been late in 15 years," the length of time he has been at the church.

Ford waved and smiled at a cheering crowd of about 200 waiting across the street. He joined Mrs. Ford inside, sitting four rows from the front of the church, facing a large American flag hanging from the ceiling.

Fitzgerald opened his sermon with a light-hearted welcome to the President and First Lady, saying, "I've always been curious about that title, First Lady. In these times of the Equal Rights Amendment I wonder if we shouldn't call your husband First Gentleman." As the congregation chuckled, he said titles seemed anachronistic and perhaps the President and his wife should be called "First Woman and First Man." But he concluded that would cause confusion with Adam and Eve. So Fitzgerald said, "Perhaps we should welcome them as our brother and sister in Christ, Gerald and Betty."

The theme of the sermon was that Christians are supposed to be stewards of the community and the faith.

Fitzgerald said, "Our President is a vivid and striking example of a steward in the mystery of the community." He added that under the American political system, "He is given the responsibility but not always the authority... "Gerald is in succession to many fine examples of good stewardship."

The Fords left the church at 12:12. The crowd outside had waited through the service and cheered again. The Fords posed with the pastor, then returned by motorcade to the home of William Getzen.

On the way back, Ford passed "Simple Sam's" market where a sign offered "Free Coke to every U.S. President." Ford didn't take it up.

The President wore a dark blue suit, blue striped tie and white shirt. Betty wore a white knit dress.

Before the church service, Dr. William Lukash, President's Physician, said Ford suffered no ill effects from his long day in the rain Saturday. But he said Ford's knees were stiff after getting in and out of his car so often.

Hoyt and Fischer

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