

Speech: JFK's Inaugural Address 20th January 1961

The inauguration of John F. Kennedy as the 35th President of the United States was held on Friday, January 20, 1961, at the East Portico of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. Kennedy took office following the November 1960 presidential election, in which he narrowly defeated Richard Nixon, the incumbent Vice President. He was the first Catholic to become President, the youngest person elected to the office and the first president born in the 20th century.

You can see the full address here: [Full Address](#)

Transcript:

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom--symbolizing an end as well as a beginning--signifying renewal as well as change. For I have **sworn**¹ before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our **forebears**² prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe--the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go **forth**³ from this time and place, to friend and **foe**⁴ alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans--born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage--and unwilling to witness or permit the slow **undoing**⁵ of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

¹ To swear: (verb) to promise firmly

² Forebear: (noun) a relative who lived in the past

³ Forth: (from a place) out or away, or (from a point in time) forward

⁴ Foe: (noun) enemy

⁵ Undoing: (noun) the cause of someone's or something's failure