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THE WHITE HOUSE

FOLLOWING IS THE TRANSCRIPT OF A TAPE
MRS. KENNEDY MADE IN BEHALF OF THE
NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

The twentieth birthday of the National Gallery of Art seems almost like a birthday for me, too. Because my love of art was born there -- throughout the many years I have lived in Washington, the Gallery has come to have a very special meaning for me. I remember as a young girl my first visit there with my mother and sister. We had lunch with John Walker who has been Chief Curator and who is now Director of the Gallery, and afterwards we looked at the paintings and sculpture together.

It was then I first discovered one of my greatest delights: the deep pleasure experienced in looking at masterpieces of art and sculpture. This was the first of countless visits I have made to the National Gallery through the years.

Because I love art -- like so many people -- I am sometimes asked how one can learn to appreciate painting and sculpture. Well, I feel the best way is by using your eyes, by focusing your whole attention on a work of art, to try to understand the message the artist wants to convey.

I remember this as one of the most important things I learned from the remarkable art critic Bernhard Berenson whom I knew and from whom I learned a great deal. I know that millions of Americans have had the same experience I have had in looking at great art and visiting the National Gallery. To me it is one of the country's greatest cultural assets, and the Gallery is so beautiful, I am always proud to hear the impression it makes on visitors from abroad who come to admire the treasures collectors have given the Gallery is just twenty years.

In the coming years, I am sure that my children will come to know the Gallery. After all, a child of any age gets his own message, his own very important emotional response from looking at a work of art. He should be encouraged to have that opportunity often, by his parents and by his teachers.

And certainly we are fortunate in having our beautiful National Gallery waiting for us here in Washington. It is here for one purpose and one purpose only: for all of us to enjoy.

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