

Pope Sends Advance Message to U.S.

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(April 10, 2008) Pope Benedict XVI has released a message to the people of the United States, in preparation for his trip to America next week, saying that the theme of his visit can be summed up in three simple but essential words: "Christ our hope."

He is coming to the U.S. to proclaim that "Jesus Christ is hope for men and women of every language, race, culture, and social condition," the Holy Father says in the videotaped message. He also confirmed that his address to the U.N. will emphasize the importance of natural law, "the law written on the human heart."

The Vatican Press office released the papal message to the U.S. on April 8 in the form of a video. The Pope spoke mostly in English, with a brief portion in Spanish.

The full text of the Pope's message follows:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the United States of America:

The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you! In just few days from now, I shall begin my apostolic visit to your beloved country. Before setting off, I would like to offer you a heartfelt greeting and an invitation to prayer. As you know, I shall only be able to visit two cities: Washington and New York. The intention behind my visit, though, is to reach out spiritually to all Catholics in the United States. At the same time, I earnestly hope that my presence among you will be seen as a fraternal gesture towards every ecclesial community, and a sign of friendship for members of other religious traditions and all men and women of good will. The risen Lord entrusted the apostles and the Church with his Gospel of love and peace, and his intention in doing so was that the message should be passed on to all peoples.

At this point, I should like to add some words of thanks, because I am conscious that many people have been working hard for a long time, both in Church circles and in the public services, to prepare for my journey. I am especially grateful to all who have been praying for the success of the visit, since prayer is the most important element of all. Dear friends, I say this because I am convinced that without the power of prayer, without that intimate union with the Lord, our human endeavors would achieve very little. Indeed this is what our faith teaches us. It is God who saves us, he saves the world, and all of history. He is the shepherd of his people. I am coming, sent by Jesus Christ, to bring you his word of life.

Together with your bishops, I have chosen as the theme of my journey three simple but essential words: "Christ our hope." Following in the footsteps of my venerable predecessors, Paul VI and John Paul II, I shall come to United States of America as Pope for the first time, to proclaim this great truth: Jesus Christ is hope for men and women of every language, race, culture, and social condition. Yes, Christ is the face of God present among us. Through him, our lives reach

fullness, and together, both as individuals and peoples, we can become a family united by fraternal love, according to the eternal plan of God the Father.

I know how deeply rooted this Gospel message is in your country. I am coming to share it with you, in a series of celebrations and gatherings. I shall also bring the message of Christian hope to the great assembly of the United Nations, to the representatives of all the peoples of the world. Indeed, the world has greater need of hope than ever: hope for peace, for justice, and for freedom; but this hope can never be fulfilled without obedience to the law of God, which Christ brought to fulfillment in the commandment to love one another. Do to others as you would have them do to you, and avoid doing what you would not want them to do. This "golden rule" is given in the Bible, but it is valid for all people, including non-believers. It is the law written on the human heart; on this we can all agree, so that when we come to address other matters we can do so in a positive and constructive manner for the entire human community.

Dirijo un cordial saludo a los catolicos de lengua espanola y les manifiesto mi cercania espiritual, en particular a los jóvenes, a los enfermos, a los ancianos y a los que pasan por dificultades o se sienten más necesitados. Les expreso mi vivo deseo de poder estar pronto con Ustedes en esa querida Nación. Mientras tanto, les aliento a orar intensamente por los frutos pastorales de mi inminente Viaje Apostólico y a mantener en alto la llama de la esperanza en Cristo Resucitado.

Dear brothers and sisters, dear friends in the United States, I am very much looking forward to being with you. I want you to know that, even if my itinerary is short, with just a few engagements, my heart is close to all of you, especially to the sick, the weak, and the lonely. I thank you once again for your prayerful support of my mission. I reach out to every one of you with affection, and I invoke upon you the maternal protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Que la Virgen Maria les acompañe y proteja. Que Dios les bendiga.

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