

## **Pope Calls for Renewal of American Church**

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Staff Writer

(April 17, 2008) During a Mass attended by 50,000 people in Nationals Stadium, Pope Benedict XVI said the Church and society in America is at a crossroad. He encouraged Catholics to use this moment to seek conversion and the power of the Holy Spirit, particularly through the Sacrament of Penance, to bring the witness of Christ to a society in crisis.

“I have come to America to confirm you . . . in the faith of the Apostles,” he said during his homily. “I have come to proclaim anew, as Peter proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, that Jesus Christ is Lord and Messiah . . . I have come to repeat the Apostle's urgent call to conversion and the forgiveness of sins, and to implore from the Lord a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church in this country.”

Once this conversion is achieved, he said, Catholics in America can then “offer their contemporaries a convincing account of the hope which inspires them, and to be renewed in missionary zeal for the extension of God's Kingdom.”

While calling Americans “a people of hope,” he took a moment to remember those who were unjustly prevented from enjoying that hope, such as native and Black Americans.

He also brought up the sex abuse crisis for the third time since embarking on this historic visit to the United States.

“No words of mine could describe the pain and harm inflicted by such abuse. . . . Nor can I adequately describe the damage that has occurred within the community of the Church. Great efforts have already been made to deal honestly and fairly with this tragic situation, and to ensure that children - whom our Lord loves so deeply, and who are our greatest treasure - can grow up in a safe environment. These efforts to protect children must continue. Yesterday I spoke with your Bishops about this. Today I encourage each of you to do what you can to foster healing and reconciliation, and to assist those who have been hurt.”

He said the renewal of the Church in American depends to a great extent on the renewal of the practice of Penance. “The liberating power of this sacrament, in which our honest confession of sin is met by God's merciful word of pardon and peace, needs to be rediscovered and reappropriated by every Catholic. To a great extent, the renewal of the Church in America depends on the renewal of the practice of Penance and the growth in holiness which that sacrament both inspires and accomplishes.”

He concluded: “Those who have hope must live different lives! By your prayers, by the witness of your faith, by the fruitfulness of your charity, may you point the way towards that vast horizon of hope which God is even now opening up to his Church, and indeed to all humanity: the vision of a world reconciled and renewed in Christ Jesus, our Savior.”

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