

# Pope's arrival in U.S. will be 'a moment of grace'

WASHINGTON - Pope Benedict XVI has shared his two encyclicals on hope and love with the world so the faithful will "grow in their experience of God," said a former Vatican diplomat who now heads the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services.

"His arrival among us is indeed a moment of grace, for which we must prepare, enjoy and then savor in the consideration of his message," said Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio.

His Feb. 28 talk was the first of two in a series sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington to help local Catholics prepare spiritually for the upcoming papal visit.

"His visit in April to this noble nation is a manifestation of his desire to confirm our faith in the Christ, the savior of the world," the archbishop told more than 400 people gathered at the Cathedral of St. Matthew.

Archbishop Broglio's talk on "Hope and Love Through the Eyes of Benedict XVI" examined love and the Catholic community's living out of that theological virtue, as well as hope and "what does the human person hope in?"

The pontiff speaks of love and its variety of meanings and uses, said the archbishop. He said examples would be love of country, love for family members and for neighbor, and love of God.

"One in particular stands out: love between a man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness. This would seem to be the very epitome of love," Archbishop Broglio said.

He said Pope Benedict wants to emphasize the love which God offers to humanity and the model of that love in human beings - the love between a husband and wife.

"God loves humanity without expecting anything, only because he is love itself. ...

God hands over his Son for our salvation. Jesus is the incarnation of the love of God,” said the archbishop. “He is the shepherd who seeks out the lost sheep or the father who runs out to greet the prodigal son.”

In turn, “we can love God, because he has entered and enters our life,” he said. “He comes to us, each one of us in the sacraments through which he works in our existence; with the faith of the church through which he speaks to us.”

Archbishop Broglio said the pope writes that there is a simple answer to the question: Can we truly love our neighbor, who is estranged from us and even unpleasant?

“If you really love God, there is no option (other) than to love those whom he loves. ... God loves us and continues to love us despite our failings and sins,” the archbishop said.

In the second half of his first encyclical, “Deus Caritas Est” (“God Is Love”), Pope Benedict writes about the obligation of the Christian community to perform acts of charity out of love for neighbor.

“(From) the first Christians to Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, there is an uninterrupted chain of members and organizations of the church which have been the incarnation of this spirit of charity,” said Archbishop Broglio.

He then quoted the pope’s words: “The church’s deepest nature is expressed in her threefold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable.”

The pope also writes that prayer is the best way to avoid the insufficiency “of the needs and limits of our own efforts. (It) is not a waste of time, even when the situation seems to demand immediate action.”

In his second encyclical, “Spe Salvi” (on Christian hope), the pope considers the questions: Can contemporary people really hope, and do they hope in the future, which is eternal life?

“The Holy Father affirms that with salvation we have been given hope, in which we can trust. It allows us to face the present, which although laborious, we can live and accept if it takes us to a goal,” the archbishop said.

Faith is hope, and that has always been central to biblical faith, Archbishop Broglio said.

He said the pope addresses why people reject faith in eternal life.

“The reality of life here makes many doubt. However, our hope is for eternal life, the fullness of joy, which the human person desires and longs for,” the archbishop said.

He added that the pope directs Catholics to look to Mary as a model of hope.

“From the Annunciation to the Resurrection, she trod in hope the path which was hers as mother of the Messiah,” the archbishop said.