

Text of Cardinal Egan's remarks welcoming pope to St. Patrick's

NEW YORK – Here is the text of remarks by Cardinal Edward M. Egan of New York welcoming Pope Benedict XVI before the Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York April 19.

Most Holy Father, welcome to St. Patrick's Cathedral!

The cornerstone of this historic edifice was laid on Aug. 15, 1858, by His Excellency the Most Rev. John Joseph Hughes, the first archbishop of New York. Since then St. Patrick's Cathedral has been the spiritual center of Catholic life and worship for the people of God of the Archdiocese of New York and a beloved house of prayer not only for Catholics across the nation but also for visitors of all faiths, races and cultures from every corner of the globe.

It was built with the pennies of the poor and serves as the cathedral church of what must be one of the most diverse communities of faith in all the world. Mass is offered in the parishes of the archdiocese in 35 languages every Sunday and holy day; and all of this is reflected here in St. Patrick's, where eucharistic celebrations are scheduled each year in the native languages of immigrants, pilgrims and visitors from Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania and the Americas.

It is most fitting, therefore, that we are gathered here in the first of the three "settings of hope" that you, most Holy Father, identify and brilliantly proclaim in your most recent encyclical letter, "Saved by Hope," the setting, namely, of prayer. For we are the bishops, priests, deacons, and men and women in consecrated life of greater New York and all 195 dioceses and archdioceses of our beloved nation.

Called by the divine Savior to announce and live the Gospel, to guide the faithful in justice and charity, and to lead them in prayer, we count ourselves truly blessed to be here with you, our supreme shepherd, to pray the Mass with you, and to hear from you what we must strive to be and do if we are to fulfill the vocation of hope to which we most willingly committed ourselves at our ordinations and religious

professions.

Most Holy Father, you know our weaknesses and our strengths. You know our joys and our sorrows. You know our victories and our defeats. As successor of Peter and vicar of Christ, confirm us in our faith and in our service to the Lord and his holy people.

At the same time, please know that we, clergy and religious together, pledge to you our loyalty and love. Never a day will pass that we will fail to speak to the Savior and his mother, Mary, of your needs and your hopes for the church and the world.

This is our promise and, on the occasion of your gracious visit to our native land, we make it with a fervor that is especially deep and a gratitude that is especially heartfelt. We are greatly honored that you begin your fourth year as bishop of Rome and shepherd of the church universal here with us. Please know that, as your loyal sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, we prayerfully wish you every grace, blessing and happiness throughout the years that lie ahead.

Beatissime Pater, ad multos annos! Vivas! Vivas!