

Vatican spokesman expresses hopes for Obama's presidency

VATICAN CITY - Although papal custom is to wait until inauguration day to send a congratulatory message to a new U.S. president, the Vatican spokesman expressed his hopes for Barack Obama's presidency just a few hours after his victory was declared.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi told reporters Nov. 5 that Catholics "are praying that God will enlighten and assist" the new president.

"The task of the president of the United States is an immense and heavy responsibility, not only for his own country, but for the whole world given the weight that the United States has in every sphere on the world scene," Father Lombardi said.

"We all hope the new President Obama will be able to respond to the expectations and hopes that have been placed in him, serving human rights and justice, finding the best ways to promote peace in the world and favoring the growth and dignity of persons with respect for essential human and spiritual values," Father Lombardi said.