

CONTENTS

Teacher of the faith

**ARCHBISHOP JOSÉ H.
GOMEZ**

Archbishop's Message



CNS/L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

Pope Benedict XVI greets Archbishop José Gomez at the Vatican April 20, 2012 during the "ad limina" visit by bishops from California, Nevada, Hawaii and Utah.

I was surprised, as I'm sure you all were, by the Pope's announcement that he would be stepping down from his office at the end of this month.

Pope Benedict XVI has truly been a Holy Father to the family of God, his Catholic Church. His decision to resign is a beautiful, Christ-like act of humility and love for the Church.

This is the act of a saint.

This is the act of one who thinks not about himself but only about the will of God and the good of God's people. May we all be given the grace to be so humble and so selfless in our ministries and daily responsibilities.

I received my Archbishop's pallium twice from Pope Benedict — first as Archbishop of San Antonio and then as Archbishop of Los Angeles. I will always be grateful that he appointed me to be your Archbishop.

Personally, I have always had great affection for this Pope. He is a beautiful man. I had the honor to spend time with him for more than a month this past October during the

Synod of Bishops. I was amazed, as I always am, by his joyfulness, his sense of prayer, and his intelligence.

In my opinion, Pope Benedict is one of the wisest persons in our world today. I try to learn every day from his words and example. Just witnessing his ministry, reading his writings, is a beautiful lesson for all of us in how to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

We see from his speeches, homilies and writings, that this Pope understands the world in a deep way — from economics, politics and world affairs to the spiritual and moral issues that face every individual.

Pope Benedict will be remembered as one of the Church's great teachers of the faith.

During his eight short years as Pope he has written *Jesus of Nazareth*, an important three-volume work on how to read the Gospels to find the true face of Christ. This may be one of the most important works of biblical theology in our time.

He has written encyclical letters on the virtues of love and hope and important works on the Word of God and the Eucharist. In his weekly public audience talks, the Pope has delivered a series of catecheses on the apostles and the teachings of St. Paul; on the Fathers and doctors of the Church; on the theo-

logians and religious founders and reformers of the medieval Church; and on the teaching and witness of prayer found in the Old and New Testaments.

We can reflect upon and celebrate this Pope's legacy as we prepare for our annual Religious Education Congress, which will be held next week, Feb. 21–24 at the Anaheim Convention Center (www.recongress.org).

Education in the faith is my top pastoral priority for the Archdiocese. In order to truly live our faith, we need to know what we believe and why we believe it.

I am concerned about a kind of "cultural Catholicism." I'm concerned about people going to church on Sundays without really understanding why they are going or what they are doing. I'm concerned about people not really understanding the relationship between what we believe and how we should live.

Our faith is beautiful! There is richness to our Catholic faith that embraces all of life — from our private conversations with God in prayer to our participation in society.

For me, education in the faith does not mean knowledge for the sake of knowledge.

Education in the faith means knowing Jesus Christ who comes, as the Gospel tells us, "to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God" (Luke 1: 77-78).

Our faith should make all the difference in our lives. And that should be the aim of all our religious education and catechesis — to change people's lives by bringing them into contact with the love of Jesus Christ and the truth of his Gospel.

Our religious education and catechesis should inspire a more intense practice of the faith. It should inspire people to want to know their faith better so that they can live it more fully — with greater love and devotion.

So let us ask God's blessing on our Religious Education Congress — and all those who are teachers of the faith. And let us pray for one another this week — and for our universal Church.

Let us thank God today for the love and witness of Pope Benedict XVI. Let us entrust him to our Blessed Mother Mary and pray that he will continue to have joy and peace and many more years for prayer and reflection. TD

Follow Archbishop Gomez at: www.facebook.com/ArchbishopGomez.

THE POPE RESIGNS

6 Looking ahead: Resignation will set in motion period of transition.

7 Next conclave: Potential cardinal-electors include 11 from U.S.

10 U.S. church leaders: Surprise, admiration for pope's decision.

12 Announcement: Text of Pope Benedict's resignation remarks.

ARCHDIOCESE/NATION

5 Statement: Archdiocese responds to L.A. Times' story regarding Catholic Cemeteries operations.

8 The Faces of God: St. Peter Chanel, Hawaiian Gardens.

11 Legal path uncertain for for-profits fighting HHS mandate.

14 Preview: Religious Education Congress begins next week.

16 Local Events: Celebrating ministry, service, commitment and dignity.

OP-ED/SPIRITUALITY

14 Fr. Ron Rolheiser: What does it mean to focus our attention on God?

DEPARTMENTS

13 This Week's Readings

15 Calendar of Events

On the cover:

■Pope Benedict XVI attends a celebration for his 85th birthday in the Clementine Hall at the Vatican April 16, 2012 (large photo); Pope Benedict greets young people at the World Youth Day vigil in Madrid Aug. 20, 2011 (small photo).

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To our readers:

■This week's issue of The Tidings is devoted primarily to stories regarding Pope Benedict XVI announcing his resignation Feb. 11. Additional articles, including the reaction of world church and political leaders, may be found online at www.the-tidings.com.

Also online are extended articles on the events featured in abbreviated form on page 16 this week: the World Day of the Sick Mass, the Cardinal's Awards Dinner, and the World Marriage Day Mass.

The San Pedro Regional Section, originally scheduled to appear this week, will run in the Feb. 22 issue. TD



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