



Pope Benedict XVI Loves Americans -- and Millions of Americans Love Him

by Newt Gingrich ([more by this author](#))

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I witnessed firsthand this week that Pope Benedict loves America and Americans.

The first great moment of connection came at the end of the White House welcoming ceremony when Pope Benedict XVI said simply, "God Bless America."

The people on the White House lawn were electrified by this simple three-word closing.

They had all been shocked in recent weeks to see a different kind of religious figure saying vicious things about America. The stark and compelling contrast had enormous impact -- both for the immediate crowd and for the millions watching on television.

Callista and I were very fortunate to have four opportunities to experience the magnetism and impact of Pope Benedict XVI last week.



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The Largest White House Welcome in History

We were at the White House welcoming ceremony (there were 13,000 of us, the largest welcome at the White House in history).

Callista sings in the Basilica Choir and was fortunate enough to be part of the Vespers (evening prayers) Wednesday afternoon in an intimate setting in the Crypt Church of the Basilica. As a spouse I got to attend in the upper Church and see the Pope enter and exit and watch both Vespers and his talk to the assembled Cardinals and Bishops.

Then we attended the Mass at Nationals Stadium with 45,000 other enthusiastic participants.

Finally, by grace, we had an opportunity to attend the Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

Callista took some fantastic photos of Benedict, including a shot of him with President Bush. You can view her photo album of the Papal visit [here](#).



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Three Big Impressions from the Papal Visit

Three big things hit me from the Papal visit:

First, the Pope seemed to gain energy and strength from the enthusiasm and love of his American audiences. The very strength of the reception became his strength. I am certain he returned to Italy a stronger and more dedicated evangelist for his belief that Christ is Hope.

Second, many -- probably most -- Americans were eager to have a religious leader who appreciated their country, liked them, and clearly wished them well in a positive message of love, salvation, and hope.

Third, my impression of the Pope has grown far beyond the original reports of his intellectual strength and his dedication to rebuilding faith and reason (in contrast to the secular dictatorship of rationality which he had experienced in Nazi Germany and had seen in the Soviet tyranny). The leader we saw was the embodiment of leadership and conviction whose presence made an enormous impact on those who experienced it. The pope is clearly not going to be simply an interim leader between Pope John Paul II and some future younger leader. Pope Benedict XVI is going to be an historic force for the reassertion of faith and reason in the lives of Catholics and people of all faiths.

Fittingly, Benedict XVI's last official words in the U.S. were "God Bless America." After personally experiencing the Pope's visit last week, I can say with confidence that America returns the love.



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The Gingrich-Pelosi Climate Change Ad: Why I Took Part

Many of you have written to me to ask why I recently taped an advertisement with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi for The Alliance for Climate Protection, a group founded by former Vice President Al Gore.

I completely understand why many of you would have questions about this, so I want to take this opportunity to explain my reasons. First of all, I want to be clear: I don't think that we have conclusive proof of global warming. And I don't think we have conclusive proof that humans are at the center of it.

But here's what we do know. There is an important debate going on right now over the right energy policy, the right environmental policy, and making sure we do the right things for our future and the future of our children and grandchildren. Conservatives are missing from this debate, and I think that's a mistake. When it comes to preserving our environment for future generations, we can't have a slogan of "Just yell no!"

I have a different view. I think it's important to be on the stage, to engage in the debate, and to communicate our position clearly. There is a big difference between left-wing environmentalism that wants higher taxes, bigger government, more bureaucracy, more regulation, more red tape, and more litigation and a Green Conservatism that wants to use science, technology, innovation, entrepreneurs, and prizes to find a way to creatively invent the kind of environmental future we all want to live in. Unless we start making the case for the latter, we're going to get the former. That's why I took part in the ad.

Italy Makes It Three: The Right Makes Gains in Europe

Finally, in news studiously ignored by the mainstream media, parliamentary elections in Italy last week routed the Communists and the Greens and marked the third big victory for the Right in Europe after the elections of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

The elections were a history-making win for the party of Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. For the first time since the end of World War II, no one will represent the Communist Party in the Italian parliament. The Greens were also voted out.

Michael Ledeen, my colleague at the America Enterprise Institute, points out another significant feature of the elections: "Berlusconi is an outspoken, even passionate admirer of George W. Bush and the United States of America. Reminds one of the elections that brought Sarkozy to the Elysee, doesn't it? Best to keep that quiet, or somebody might notice that hatred of America doesn't seem to affect the voters in Italy, France or Germany."

The scale of Berlusconi and the center-right's victory in Italy opens the door to significant reform for the first time in decades. Could real change be coming to Europe?

Your friend,



Newt Gingrich

P.S. -- [Another item](#) you likely didn't see in the mainstream media this week was a ruling by three federal judges in New Jersey forbidding the East Brunswick, New Jersey football coach from bowing his head and going down on one knee during voluntary, student-led prayer before games. The East Brunswick Board of Education had charged that the football coach's actions were an unconstitutional endorsement of religion and a violation of their policy against employees engaging in prayer -- even if the coach didn't speak the words of the prayer along with his team. The ruling is being supported and applauded by all the usual suspects engaged in driving religion from all but the narrowest spheres of American life. To fight back, arm yourself with Rediscovering God in America, available as both a book (in your choice of [unautographed](#), [autographed](#), or [personalized](#)) and [DVD](#).

Mr. Gingrich is the former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and author of "[Winning the Future](#)" (published by Regnery, a HUMAN EVENTS sister company). [Click here to get his free Winning the Future e-mail newsletter.](#)

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