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## U.S. delegation to pope's installation headed by Gov. Bush

By *The Florida Catholic* and Catholic News Service, Orlando

Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida called the opportunity to lead the U.S. delegation to the inauguration Mass at the Vatican April 24 for Pope Benedict XVI, "truly an honor."

"I was impressed with the rich tradition, pageantry, beauty and symbolism of the inaugural Mass. I was also moved by how thousands of faithful came from all across the globe to join the pope as he began his journey," the governor said in an e-mail interview with *The Florida Catholic* the day after the inauguration. He also noted the pope's homily was "very powerful in its moral clarity."

Bush, who converted to Catholicism, the faith of his wife Columba, in 1996, was selected by his brother, President George W. Bush, to lead the official U.S. delegation.

Other members of the delegation included Maryland Lt. Gov. Michael Steele; Carl A. Anderson, supreme knight of the Knights of Columbus; Helen Alvare, associate professor of law at The Catholic University of America, Washington; and Frank Hanley, president emeritus of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

"We went to represent all Americans, particularly those of the Roman Catholic faith," said Gov. Bush, who had an opportunity to meet the new pontiff in a receiving line of dignitaries.

Asked why Benedict XVI received such great applause when he acknowledged in his homily that he is not alone



CNS PHOTO BY L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO

**Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, left, who led the U.S. delegation to Pope Benedict XVI's April 24 inaugural Mass in St. Peter's Square, greets Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Basilica after the Mass.**

in his ministry and asked for prayers, the governor speculated, 'People from around the world eagerly want the pope to succeed and through prayer we all can support him. His humility in asking for prayer drew an immediate and heartfelt response.'

Bush said he believes the College of Cardinals made a good choice in selecting Cardinal Ratzinger as the new pope, calling Benedict 'wise, a true theologian (who) offers moral clarity in an era of ambivalence.'

In a press conference in Rome the afternoon before the Mass, Bush said Catholic politicians can balance guidance from the Vatican with a commitment to following secular laws.

'I take advice from the leader of my church very seriously,' Bush said at the April 23 press conference.

'I also have a duty to uphold the laws of the state. I don't believe this necessarily has to be in conflict,' he said, adding that religious leaders have a right to take a stand on political issues.

'This helps not just Catholic governors, but others as well,' said Bush.

Reflecting on the new papacy in Rome and back in Florida, the governor noted that Pope Benedict is likely to continue his predecessor's legacy of an emphasis on human dignity.

'The dialogue about creating a culture of life is one that needs to be ongoing,' he said. 'It's not just related to abortion; it relates to end-of-life issues as well.'

'It's wonderful to have moral leaders who are not ambiguous about what's right and what's wrong,' he said in Rome.

He anticipates Pope Benedict will also celebrate 'the tremendously positive impact of Pope John Paul II by continuing his legacy of openness to people of all cultures and religions.'

He also expects the new pope to continue to promote unity among people of faith and good will and will work 'to promote, among young people especially, a sense of mission and belonging in the world,' he said.

After the April 23 press conference, Bush told Catholic News Service that he expected the April 24 Mass to be 'very moving.'

'I'm assuming it's going to be spectacular. My wife led the delegation to Pope John Paul's 25th anniversary and the beatification of Mother Teresa, and she keeps pulling out the (photo) albums. Now I'll have my own photos,' he said.

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