International Movement We Are Church

We Are Church Hopes Pope Benedict XVI Will Be A Peace-Maker, A Reconciler

"The choice of Joseph Ratzinger to be the new Bishop of Rome, and servant of the servants of God, will provoke controversy, vigorous debate and be seen as potentially divisive by many people within and beyond the Church," declared **Christian Weisner**, chair of the international movement We Are Church. "**We hope that he will be `less rigid' than he was as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith when he wrote hard-line documents such as those against women and ecumenism.** Many Catholics who were exhilarated by the reforms and renewal of the Second Vatican Council, and the theological creativity of those years, appreciate the inspiring contributions made by the younger Professor Joseph Ratzinger. However, the conservative transformation which he underwent - some would say provoked by what he perceived as the anarchy of social unrest in the late 1960s - is a source of anxiety to many Catholics today," Weisner says.

"Nevertheless, his choice of the name, Benedict XVI, causes us to hope that like Benedict XV he will be a peace-maker, a reconciler," says Isaac Wüst from We are Church in the Netherlands." It must be remembered that Benedict XV brought an end to a theological 'reign of terror' which had existed within the Church at that time. Pope Benedict XVI's past experience as a theologian, diocesan Bishop and Vatican official will offer him the possibility of responding to the complex reality which is the contemporary Catholic Church, of both East and West, North and South."

We Are Church earnestly hopes that Pope Benedict XVI will be encouraged and strengthened by all the people of God to regain his earlier theological courage and creativity and to place this at the service of the Church in the new role which he has described himself as 'a simple, humble worker in God's vineyard.'

"We are fully aware of the titanic task that awaits the new pontiff." says Luigi De Paoli from We Are Church (Noi Siamo Chiesa) in Italy. "One single person cannot find just and comprehensive solutions to all the burning problems in the Catholic church. The Catholic church is the most universal organization in the world. This must be reflected in the way of decision making with real participation of all concerned, including women and men, lay and clergy, young and old, right and left."

"The only way to find solutions to global problems is to cooperate with other Christian denominations, and in dialogue with non-Christian faith traditions," affirmes Maureen Fiedler SL , Catholic leader in the US and host of an interfaith radio program. " This would be an unprecedented example for the secular world of how religion can contribute to solving problems and building peace, of healing wounds and reconciling opponents, and of empowering the faithful to take on responsibility for the common good."

"We maintain the hope that our Church will really be one that welcomes all persons who following the Gospel accomplish the great commandment of love," says **Gladys Parentelli** from We are Church Uruguay/Venezuela. "**We hope that Benedct XVI listen to what the huge Catholic communities especially in Latin American countries are saying and that his pontificate will be an effort to denounce and eliminate all relationships of inequality and violence in society and within the church.**" Gladys Parentelli from Uruguay/Venezuela is one of the few women who had the privilege of attending the Second Vatican Council as a Catholic youth leader.

"The Church's leaders should move from a model of Roman Empire and enter an age marked by consultation and limits on the papacy's absolute power," says Prof. Tissa Balasuriya, OMI, a priest and theologian from Sri Lanka and founder of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).

Together with many other Third World theologians he calls on the Catholic Church to decentralize, consult laity, and limit the terms of future popes.

The international movement We Are Church wishes to affirm its strong sense of being part of the body of Christ receiving the essential teaching of the Church, yet called to be voices that challenge the pastors of the Church, including the Pope, that they might respond more authentically and transparently to the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of our time.

We Are Church wishes to express its faith, trust and confidence in the continued presence of God's Holy Spirit guiding the People of God in its pilgrimage through history. **We pray that the Holy Spirit will assist the new Pope Benedict XVI that he will be an instrument of fraternity and unity for the Catholic Church, other Christian Churches and for all women and men of good will.**

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The international movement We are Church , founded in Rome in 1996, is committed to the renewal of the Roman Catholic Church on the basis of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the theological spirit developed from it. We are Church evolved from the Church Referendum in Austria in 1995 that was started after the paedophilia scandal around Vienna's Cardinal Groer. We are Church is represented in more than twenty countries on all continents and is networking world-wide with similar-minded reform groups. As international studies of renowned religion sociologists confirm, We are Church as a reform movement within the Church represents the `voice of the people in the pews' and has demonstrated this in several Shadow Synods in Rome.

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Zuletzt geändert am 31.07.2006