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## **“Happy Birthday, Holy Father!”**

Monday, April 16th, is the 85th birthday of Benedict XVI. The Prelate of Opus Dei, Bishop Javier Echevarría, offers some words of congratulations.

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The birthday of one's father is always a joyful occasion for the children. This is what we who are the Church's sons and daughters now experience with the birthday of Benedict XVI. I recall with emotion the day of his election, seven years ago, when he

first addressed the expectant crowd in St. Peter's square, and referred to himself as a "simple and humble worker in the Lord's vineyard."

This is how the Pope is carrying out his Petrine ministry, with the serenity of one who abandons himself completely in God's hands. It is an example for all of us, and we feel encouraged by this Father of ours, humble and close to each one of us, to build up the Church as the place of unity and love described by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

*Omnes cum Petro ad Iesum per Mariam*, "all with Peter to Jesus through Mary," St. Josemaria so often prayed. The Pope, the successor of Peter, is always the visible source and foundation of the Church's unity. We know that, united to him, we find ourselves united and close to Jesus, our Savior. Ours is a unity of hearts with a special joy, above all now that

we celebrate the birthday of the Pope, a few days before the anniversary of his election as Roman Pontiff.

The Holy Father's untiring dedication in the service of the Church "moves" us in the most literal sense of the word: it moves our affections and also our will to be more faithful to Benedict XVI. He has dedicated his whole life to God: right from his youth, when he sensed God's call to the priesthood; and later, over the years, contributing with his intellectual gifts to a deeper theological grasp of the Church's doctrine and with his activity as an apostle and pastor to stirring up the faith in the hearts of many people. Now, as Pontiff, he continues with this mission, grounding his ministry in the celebration of the Eucharist and in prayer, realizing that only with Christ's grace can the Church

carry out the task our Lord has entrusted to her.

Congratulations, Holy Father! We love you deeply, with a filial affection, and we ask God to grant you abundant graces, and to fill your ministry with fruits of sanctity for the Church and with peace for civil society.

Bishop Javier Echevarría

Prelate of Opus Dei

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