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SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF ELECTION OF POPE BENEDICT XVI

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL, EDINBURGH

SUNDAY 25 MARCH 2007

As we conclude the celebration of this sacred liturgy during which we have prayed for our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, I wish to thank His Eminence Cardinal O'Brien, all the bishops of Scotland, priests, religious and lay people who have made this event possible.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence of the British Ambassador to the Holy See, Mr Francis Campbell, members of Government from Westminster and of course here in Scotland. Your presence manifests the solid relationship between the Holy See and the United Kingdom in so many areas of cooperation particularly on important issues such as development, justice and peace throughout the world.

It is of course Pope Benedict XVI who directs the Holy See's active participation in offering the Catholic Church's contribution in assisting the family of Nations to attain its aspirations for the good of all peoples.

Certainly, in these two years of his Pontificate we have been edified and touched by the depth of his words and the gentleness of his fatherly concern. In fact, by almost universal recognition the writings, homilies, speeches and discourses of the Pontiff are being received for their wisdom and depth. Of course, I cannot reflect on all of them, but certainly we have noticed that the titles of his two major documents issued thus far contain the word "caritas", love or charity. His encyclical of last year, is entitled, "Deus caritas est", (God is love) while the post-synodal exhortation on the Eucharist published a few days ago has the title, "Sacramentum caritatis" (The sacrament of charity).

With this in mind, the Church's life within itself, its worship, its unity, its discipline, and so on, is based on love, and its action towards the world is rooted in that same reality of charity. Therefore, we can appreciate what he wrote in the encyclical: "The entire activity of the Church is an expression of love that seeks the integral good of man ... Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs." It is a true "service of charity" (number 19).

While his words have pointed us to the way of love and charity, so has his paternal presence. We have been touched by his gentleness and kindness. Just last Sunday he visited the prison for juveniles in Rome. There he was with these young people who for one reason or another had lost their way. Yet he comforted them and in the opening line of his homily said:

"I have come here quite willingly to visit you and the most important moment of this time together is the Holy Mass in which the love of God is renewed, a love which consoles us and gives us peace."

Let us continue to pray for our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI; let us pray for his health and wellbeing and let us pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide him in his ministry of love for the Church and the world.