

## Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Washington

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Global Research, April 17, 2008

17 April 2008

Region: [USA](#)  
Theme: [Religion](#)

While we watch on TV Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Washington , D.C. , let's look at how those who planned the Pope's welcome have nullified any chance to raise many of the moral issues most needing to be addressed in the world today.

For example, the Pope has never gone along with the president of the world's most powerful nation in launching an aggressive war on the sovereign state of Iraq after lying to his own people and the rest of the world about the reasons.

But you might wonder after observing the pomp and pageantry. After his arrival on Wednesday, April 16, at Andrews Air Force Base, the Pope made his first stop the White House to pay a visit to President George W. Bush. Isn't it a little strange that the representative on earth of the Prince of Peace received, as would any secular head of state, a 21-gun salute and listened to the Marine Corps Band play the national anthems of the Vatican and the U.S. ? Are the U.S. and the Holy See political and military allies? One might be forgiven for believing so.

Then in the Oval Office President George W. Bush got the jump on the Pope by preempting any attempt he might have made to repeat the concerns he has expressed previously about the Iraq War. For instance, in his 2007 Easter message the Pope said, "nothing positive comes from Iraq , torn apart by continual slaughter as the civil population flees." But the discussion consisted merely of Bush bragging about the efforts by the U.S. military to protect Christians in a country we have brought to ruin.

So did the Pope have anything else he might have wanted to say to Bush about peace in the Middle East ? Or about skyrocketing food prices that threaten famine in dozens of countries? Or about the suffering and job loss caused to working people in the U.S. by the export of jobs in order to make more profits for global capitalism? Or about the gathering recession resulting from enormous debt and financial policies that favor mainly the rich?

If so it would have been tough to speak up at this point after enough staged political hoopla to launch a manned mission to Mars. To his credit though, the Pope, who has angered the Bush administration by seeking positive relations with Russia , refused an invitation to a White House dinner.

Of course the dirt-shoveling U.S. mass media have made their number one interest concerning the Pope's visit the Catholic Church's problems with priests who sexually abused children under their tutelage. Yes, it was a scandal, and yes, the Church has had to confront it. But why with the Pope's visit is it still the top headline? And is what happened in the Church really any worse than the continuous sex-related scandals involving U.S. Protestant pastors and politicians, most of them Republican, in the past few years?

Reporting on events taking place on Thursday, the Washington Post offered the following front page headline: "Pope Benedict Praises American Spirit of Hope: In Mass for 46,000 faithful, Benedict again mentions clergy sex scandal and urges Catholics to reach out to its victims." The two sub-stories were "Pope Watch: Addressing Sexual Abuse," and "Deepak Chopra: Is the Pope Too Tainted?"

Pop-guru Chopra wrote in his commentary, "The Church has become too tainted by scandal to offer answers that might satisfy a new generation of seekers." What an arrogant judgment! In this generalization, Chopra writes off an ancient institution which, despite the corruption any creation of mere humans is subject to, has over the last 2,000 years been the spiritual home to billions of people; one which even in our era has produced saints and been a clarion of conscience to many who have become weary from a world drowning in violence and injustice.

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