

## The Messenger of Hope

*"I come as a friend, a preacher of the Gospel,"* Pope Benedict smilingly waved to a crowd in the Rose Garden of The White House who wished him a happy 81<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Calling his pastoral visit *"Jesus Christ –Our Hope"*, the Holy Father said that his presence would *"be a source of renewal and hope."*

While he urged Americans to respect, defend and promote human rights and religious freedom, he also asked them to educate and protect future generations.

But future Catholic generations depend on how he handles the sex-abuse scandal that has rocked the Church in recent years.

It was *"very badly handled,"* the Pope frankly said to the American bishops who had in some cases been more concerned about protecting the church's image than they had been to protect innocent children and youngsters.

*"It is important that those who have suffered be given loving pastoral attention. Efforts to protect children must continue,"* the Pope insisted in an open-air Mass in Washington DC.

Indeed, the Church's *raison d'être* is to give healing and love of God to all people especially children. It must, therefore, point at all times not to itself but to Jesus Christ who is *The Way, The Truth and The Life*.

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