

After the baptism of his baby brother in church, Jason sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car.

His father asked him three times what was wrong.

Finally, the boy replied,

"The priest said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, but I wanted to stay with you guys."

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Promising to also be president for those who opposed him, Obama quoted Lincoln, his political idol and the man who ended slavery: "We are not enemies, but friends — though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection."

**From a column by Maureen Dowd, writing for the New York Times**

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**Excerpts from an article that was distributed by the Catholic News Service.**

### **Pope sends congratulatory message to Obama**

By Cindy Wooden

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Pope Benedict XVI sent a personal message to President-elect Barack Obama Nov. 5, congratulating him and offering his prayers for Obama and for all the people of the United States.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said that because the message was addressed personally to Obama the Vatican did not plan to publish the full text.

However, he said, the papal message opened by referring to the "historic occasion" of the election, marking the first time a black man has been elected president of the United States.

The pope congratulated Obama, his wife and family, Father Lombardi said.

"He assured him of his prayers that God would help him with his high responsibilities for his country and for the international community," Father Lombardi said.

The pope also prayed that "the blessing of God would sustain him and the American people so that with all people of good will they could build a world of peace, solidarity and justice," the spokesman said.

Asked if the pope mentioned any specific issues he was concerned about, Father Lombardi responded, "peace, solidarity and justice."

... "The task of the president of the United States is an immense and heavy responsibility, not only for his own country, but for the whole world given the weight that the United States has in every sphere on the world scene," Father Lombardi said.

"We all hope the new President Obama will be able to respond to the expectations and hopes that have been placed in him, serving human rights and justice, finding the best ways to promote peace in the world and favoring the growth and dignity of persons with respect for essential human and spiritual values," Father Lombardi said.

The Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, was published Nov. 5 with an opinion piece headlined "A choice that unites."

"In the end, change occurred. The slogan that accompanied Barack Obama's whole electoral campaign found its expression" in the results of the Nov. 4 election, said the article by Giuseppe Fiorentino.

"As the president-elect underlined in his victory speech in Chicago, America really is the country where anything can happen," a country "able to overcome fractures and divisions that not long ago seemed impossible to heal," it said.

But, the article said, the vote for Obama was "very pragmatic" because he was the "more convincing" candidate for "an electorate needing new hope, especially for a quick economic recovery."

„, Vatican Radio called the election of Obama a "historic day" for the United States and underlined the overwhelmingly positive reaction around the world.

A commentary on the election for Asianews, a Rome-based missionary news agency, ran under the headline: "I'm happy for the victory of Barack Obama."

Written by Father Piero Gheddo, a member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, the commentary listed three reasons for satisfaction at the result:

-- Obama will give a positive impression of the United States at a time when "America is seen in a bad light and even hated throughout the world."

-- The election of the first black U.S. president offers a lesson on racial equality, especially for Europe. It is an extraordinarily encouraging sign for black people around the world, who have often faced humiliation, it said.

-- Obama's victory speech ended with the words, "God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America," something that would not be possible in Catholic Italy and which demonstrates that religion remains at the foundations of public life in the United States.

Contributing to this story was John Thavis.