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Q & A: Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez, OFM

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Distinctly Catholic

We conclude our week of examining the episcopacy with comments from Archbishop Roberto Gonzalez, the Archbishop of San Juan, Puerto Rico. Archbishop Gonzalez previously served as the Bishop of Corpus Christi, Texas and as an auxiliary in Boston.

The question: What is the best thing about being a bishop in 2010?

Archbishop Gonzalez:

The best thing about being a bishop in 2010 is to see the call for a "new evangelization" begin to come to fruition. I was ordained a bishop in 1988, not long after Pope John Paul II, speaking to the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in 1983, first called for an evangelization that was new in ardor, expression and methods. As a bishop in Boston and later in Corpus Christi, I worked with my brother bishops in the US to explore ways of bringing this new evangelization into being, focusing especially on the relationship of faith and culture where the Hispanic presence in the US Church offers such vital insights. I came to Puerto Rico in 1999 and, with the whole Church, witnessed the dawn of the new millennium, a moment for which Pope John Paul II had called the Church to prayer, thanksgiving, and the forgiveness of debts. What a blessing that special Holy Year was for the whole Church!

One of the areas where we see this new evangelization at work is in the new ecclesial movements such as Communion & Liberation, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, and Focolare. These groups are finding new ways to invite believers to deepen their relationship with the Lord, new ways to express their experience of faith, new ways to proclaim the Gospel to our modern culture which often seems awash in a sea of relativism and despair.

In announcing the new pontifical Council for the New Evangelization in June, Pope Benedict XVI used an interesting word. He said, "I have decided to create a new organism, in the form of a pontifical council, with the principal task of promoting a renewed evangelization in the countries where the first

proclamation of faith has already resounded and where there are churches of ancient foundation present, but which are living through a progressive secularization of society and a kind of 'eclipse of the sense of God,?? The word 'organism' indicates to me that the bishops of our day, with their clergy and lay faithful, must see this new evangelization not in programmatic or bureaucratic terms, but as a way of life, rooted in the event of Jesus Christ, growing in new and creative ways. It is exciting to be a bishop at a time when our apostolic calling to spread the Good News once again is the focus of new and exciting ways, spreading the Gospel to a culture that is as hungry for God as was the Mediterranean culture to which Sts. Peter and Paul preached.

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