

Obama Says Argentinian Pope Signals 'Strength and Vitality' of Latin America

President Obama on Wednesday offered words of encouragement to the newly-elected Pope Francis.

"On behalf of the American people, Michelle and I offer our warm wishes to His Holiness Pope Francis as he ascends to the Chair of Saint Peter and begins his papacy. As a champion of the poor and the most vulnerable among us, he carries forth the message of love and compassion that has inspired the world for more than two thousand years—that in each other we see the face of God," Obama said.

"As the first pope from the Americas, his selection also speaks to the strength and vitality of a region that is increasingly shaping our world, and alongside millions of Hispanic Americans, those of us in the United States share the joy of this historic day. Just as I appreciated our work with Pope Benedict XVI, I look forward to working with His Holiness to advance peace, security and dignity for our fellow human beings, regardless of their faith. We join with people around the world in offering our prayers for the Holy Father as he begins the sacred work of leading the Catholic Church in our modern world."