

## **Archbishop José Gomez Statement concerning the first encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI.**

Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical "*Deus Caritas Est*" (God is Love) is a document that challenges us to understand the meaning of God's love, and how our love for each other is the unifying force in our relationship with Him.

The subject of his first major document of faith is not entirely surprising. In his homily at the Mass for the beginning of the conclave that led to his election he gave us a clue as how he believes unconditional love challenges us as followers of Christ.

Then, Cardinal Ratzinger said, "We must become mature in this adult faith; we must guide the flock of Christ to this faith. And it is this faith — only faith — which creates unity and takes the form of love."

In his encyclical, the Holy Father, captures the word "love" and places it totally in a 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian context. He helps us to understand that love of God and our fellow man, challenges us to go beyond the status quo, building a just society, shaped by love, that will allow give dignity and freedom to each person.

Pope Benedict discusses with clarity that our acts of social justice must be defined by our love of God and one another.

I think "*Deus Caritas Est*", underscores the kind of gentle teacher this Pope is and will be, as he helps us to understand how to live our faith in an ever increasingly materialistic and secular world.