



Photos by Joe Raedle, Getty Images

**Anticipation:** People wait for the arrival of Pope Benedict XVI for his Mass at Havana's Plaza of the Revolution on Wednesday, the last day of his three-day visit to Cuba. It was Benedict's first trip to the communist country.

## Pope tells Havana that Cuba needs freedom to change

### Pontiff speaks out against those who impose their 'truth'

By Girish Gupta  
Special for USA TODAY

HAVANA — Hundreds of thousands of Cubans from all over this communist-run nation crowded the Plaza of the Revolution on Wednesday to hear Pope Benedict XVI demand more freedom for the Roman Catholic Church and preach against "fanaticism."

As President Raúl Castro watched from the front row, Benedict focused on the need for Christian love in a country that has been under dictatorship for 50 years and until recently was officially atheist.

He referred to a biblical account of how children persecuted by the Babylonian king preferred to face death by fire rather than betray their faith.

"Cuba and the world need change, but this will occur only if each one is in a position to seek the truth and chooses the way of love, sowing reconciliation and fraternity," he said.

Benedict said people find freedom when they seek the truth. Christianity offers, but the pursuit of truth must be voluntary. "There are those who wrongly interpret this search for the truth, leading them to irrationality and fanaticism. They close themselves up in 'their truth' and try to impose it on others," the pope said from the altar in front of an image of Cuba's revolutionary hero Ernesto "Che" Guevara, a Marxist who oversaw the execution of scores of political opponents of leader Fidel Castro.

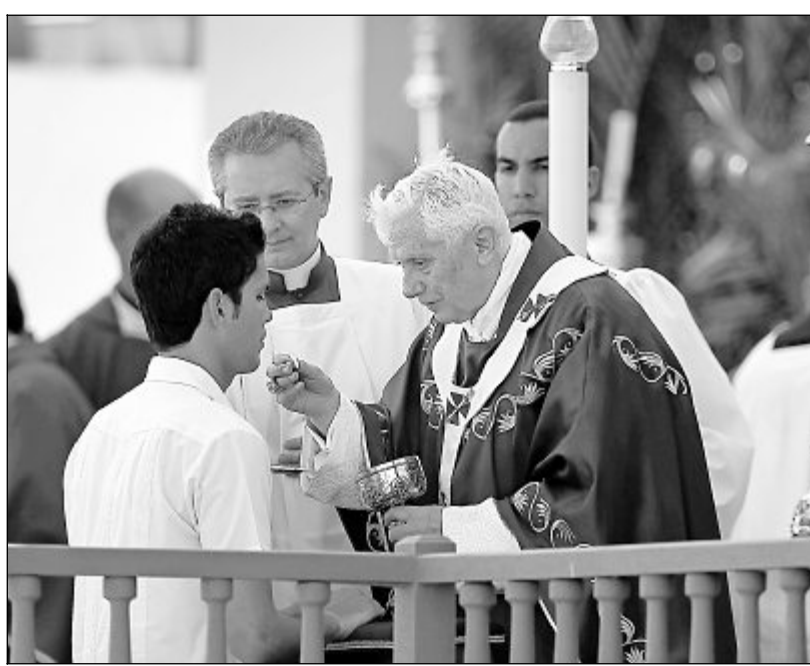
The retired Cuban leader — a one-time altar boy who was educated by Jesuit priests — met with the pope for 30 minutes after Wednesday's Mass.

Fidel Castro essentially interviewed Benedict, asking him about the changes in church teachings since he was a child, what it's like to be a pope and the challenges facing humanity, said the Rev. Federico Lombardi, spokesman for the Vatican. Benedict raised issues such as the role of freedom and liberty, Lombardi said.

The meeting began with some jokes about their ages. Fidel Castro is 85, and Benedict will reach that milestone next month. "Yes, I'm old, but I can still do my job," the pope said, according to Lombardi.

The U.S. State Department said it asked the pope to ask Cuban officials about the case of U.S. contractor Alan Gross, who is serving a 15-year prison sentence for helping Cubans obtain Internet access. The Vatican said the pope made a "humanitarian request" of Raúl Castro but did not say whether specific cases of political prisoners were discussed.

Benedict began his trip Friday in Mexico. He arrived in Cuba on Monday and left Wednesday afternoon to return to Italy.



**Administering to the flock:** Pope Benedict XVI administers Communion during his Mass at the Plaza of the Revolution on Wednesday in Havana.

At the morning's Mass, banners large and small filled the plaza, and many people took shade under umbrellas as announcers shouted, "Viva Cuba! Viva el Papa!"

"It's a privilege for this country. We Catholics feel very honored," said Maira Bisciedo, 60, who, along with three friends, wore white Pope Benedict XVI T-shirts and caps. "I hope there'll be changes after this visit."

Antonio Juan, a doctor, said Fidel Castro's hostility toward the church is in the past, but it is not up to Catholics to change Cuba for the better. "It can't depend on the pope whether things change more after this," he said.

He said the Cuban people need im-

**'It's a privilege for this country. We Catholics feel very honored. I hope there'll be changes after this visit.'**

Maira Bisciedo, Mass attendee

provements, such as in medical care. "We don't have everything we need in the hospital," Juan said. "We work but with great difficulty. There's a lot of things we can't get hold of because we don't have resources."

"The pope is something big for Cubans," said Carlos Herrera, a tourism worker who came to the plaza with his wife. "I come to hear his words, wise words for the Cuban people. That helps us. It gives us peace, it gives us unity."

Some Cubans said they were told to attend by their employers. The country is accustomed to organizing mass events, usually meant to show support for Fidel Castro.

The Vatican said the Plaza of the

Revolution holds 600,000 people. It appeared nearly full.

Oswaldo Payá, a Nobel Peace Prize-nominated activist and a Catholic, said many of his fellow activists who work for human rights and democracy were prevented from attending the Mass.

"The government repressed the arrival at the Mass of them," he said. "I'm sad about that."

Payá and other members of the Christian Liberation Movement founded the Varela Project, which collected more than 10,000 signatures from Cubans calling for a national referendum on political and economic change.

During the Mass, a man in the crowd shouted, "Pope, don't leave until communism falls!" He was led away by men in plainclothes. The incident was similar to another during the pope's Mass in Santiago on Monday, when a man shouted anti-government slogans before being beaten and hustled away.

"The state controls everything. The pope's right. We need more independence," said Jorge Rodríguez, 44, a hospital worker who was eating ice cream in central Havana. Rodríguez said religious freedom opened up a bit after a visit from Pope John Paul II in 1998, but not the economy. "People can own a private bed and breakfast, but the state controls it. I don't think the visit will change anything," he said.

Margarita Florez, 32, was selling hot dogs in central Havana and said the pope wasn't speaking about Cuba in his homily. "He was talking about the entire world needing to find its freedom. I feel free here. I can do what I like. I can walk around at 3 a.m. In other countries, I'd be killed," she said.

Raul Velasco, 52, who was selling sweets in the street, said the problem with Cuba is the economy. "We have great difficulties with the economy, but education, health is good."

Contributing: The Associated Press

## Pilot charged with crew interference

JetBlue captain could face 20 years in prison and fine of \$250,000

By Bart Jansen  
USA TODAY

Federal authorities charged a JetBlue pilot Wednesday with interfering with his flight crew by sprinting through the cabin and screaming at passengers that they should "pray (expletive) now for Jesus Christ."

An FBI affidavit filed with the criminal complaint says Clayton Osborn, 49, told his co-pilot that "things just don't matter" and "we need to take a leap of faith" before sprinting through the cabin and being wrestled to the floor by passengers on the Tuesday flight from New York to Las Vegas.

Passengers quoted in the FBI affidavit said Osborn told passengers to pray and yelled, "Guys, push it to full throttle!"

After an emergency landing in Amarillo, Texas, Osborn was removed from the aircraft and taken to a facility in the Northwest Texas Healthcare System in Amarillo for medical evaluation, where he remains.

Anyone who interferes with a flight crew faces a charge carrying a penalty of up to 20 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine or both.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Christy Drake of Dallas, who will handle the prosecution, has 30 days to bring the case before a grand jury for indictment.

Despite the incident, JetBlue CEO Dave Barger called Osborn, a 12-year veteran of the airline, "a consummate professional." Barger told NBC's *Today* show Wednesday that Osborn's situation began as a "medical situation" and became a "security situation."

"I've known the captain personally for a long period of time," Barger said of Osborn. "There's been no indication of this at all in the past."

Osborn's LinkedIn page describes him as a captain who also works in pilot recruitment and leadership development. He earned degrees from Hawthorne College in aeronautical physics and Carnegie Mellon University in physics. He lives in Richmond Hill, Ga., near Savannah.

Osborn's wife, Conny Osborn, said she had "no idea what's going on," and she told ABCNews.com to withhold judgment because "there are several different sides to every story."

Christine Lucas, a freelance journalist and newspaper columnist based in Savannah, was shocked when she learned that the JetBlue meltdown involved the affable pilot who reminded her of a G.I. Joe doll. She interviewed him last year for a series on local pilots in a local magazine *Richmond Hill Reflections*.

"He is an extremely friendly individual and extremely easy to talk to and puts others at ease," said Lucas, 36.

Osborn made no mention of health problems, medications or stress during their talk, Lucas said. In fact, she said, he seemed like a well-rounded person who was enjoying the fruits of his hard work in his career.

"He's got a lot of charisma, and I would venture just to say he wouldn't have intentionally put people in danger or even tried to rile people up in that way, at least not from what I've seen," Lucas said.

The incident was a rare and frighten-

### Unruly passenger restrained on flight

The Associated Press

A female passenger aboard a US Airways flight from Charlotte to Fort Myers, Fla., was arrested after attacking crewmembers before being wrestled to the floor by an off-duty deputy aboard the jet, an arrest report said Wednesday.

The apparently intoxicated passenger aboard US Airways Flight 1697 kicked, spit on and cursed at a flight attendant who refused to serve her alcohol, according to the arrest report by Lee County Port Authority Police.

The incident happened Tuesday afternoon, just hours after passengers aboard a JetBlue flight from New York to Las Vegas wrestled down the plane's agitated pilot.

Police charged Peggy Albedhady-Sanchez, 50, of Union City, N.J., with three counts of battery and one count of interfering with an aircraft, the report said.

A male attendant also was slapped across the jaw, the arrest report said. Albedhady-Sanchez kicked a second male flight attendant in the groin as the deputy wrestled her to the back of the jet. She continued kicking after her hands were cuffed, the report said.

one for passengers aboard Flight 191, which began about 7:30 a.m. ET and landed in Amarillo at 10:17 a.m. CT.

According to the affidavit, Osborn arrived late for the flight and missed the crew briefing, a time when security experts say crewmembers evaluate one another for problems such as intoxication or other stresses. As the plane climbed in altitude, Osborn told his co-pilot he was being evaluated by someone and then began talking about religion in an incoherent way, the affidavit from FBI agent John Whitworth says.

The co-pilot became concerned when Osborn said, "We're not going to Vegas," and "We need to take a leap of faith," according to the affidavit.

Osborn abruptly left the cockpit and pounded on the door of an occupied lavatory, alarming the rest of the flight crew when he didn't follow the company's protocol for leaving the cockpit.

"When the flight attendants met with him at the front galley to find out if anything was wrong, Osborn aggressively grabbed a flight attendant's hands," the affidavit says.

After walking to the rear of the aircraft, Osborn sprinted back to the forward galley and tried to enter his code to get back into the cockpit. His unidentified co-pilot had locked the cockpit door and asked over the intercom for passengers to restrain Osborn as he yelled about Jesus, 9/11, Iraq, Iran and terrorists.

An FBI official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said it is thought that the pilot's behavior was related to a medical issue, not terrorism. The plane was checked for bombs in Amarillo, and nothing was found.

"The flight attendants elected to have the aircraft land without having the assisting passengers return to their seats because the flight attendants felt they could not risk letting Osborn get up off the floor," the affidavit says.

Contributing: Nancy Trejos, Melanie Eversley, Kevin Johnson, Gary Strauss and the Associated Press



2009 photo by Soul Brother, WireImage

**"Medical situation" became a "security situation":** Pilot Clayton Osborn remains at a facility in Amarillo, Texas, where he was taken for medical evaluation.

## World

### Measures to protect troops from rogue attacks by Aghans

U.S. troops in Afghanistan have far-reaching new protections against rogue killers among their Afghan allies, including assigned "guardian angels," fellow servicemembers who will watch over them as they sleep. Marine Gen. John Allen, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, ordered the added protections in recent weeks to guard against insider threats, a senior military official told the Associated Press. They come in the wake of 16 attacks on U.S. and coalition forces by Afghans. The attacks accounted for nearly one-fifth of coalition combat deaths this year.

Some of the changes have been subtle, others less so. In several Afghan ministries, Americans are now allowed to carry weapons. And they have been instructed to rearrange their office desks to face the door, so they can see who is coming in, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the orders.

### French killer had marital problems, his lawyer says

Mohamed Merah, who claimed responsibility for a killing spree in France, had separated from his wife days before the attacks and was suffering "psychological difficulties," his lawyer said.

Attorney Christian Etelin sought to portray his now-slain client as a "lone wolf" with no organized crime or terrorist connections and as "an abandoned child" angry at a long-absent father.

Police say that Merah, 23, filmed himself killing three Jewish schoolchildren, a rabbi and three paratroopers this month and that he claimed he had links to al-Qaeda. Merah was killed in a gunfight with police last week. His brother is in custody, suspected of helping prepare the attacks.

Etelin said Merah got married in an Islamic ceremony in December, but he and his wife separated days before the first attack.

### Thousands march in support of military coup in Mali

Several thousand people took to the streets of Mali's capital, Bamako, on Wednesday in support of last week's military takeover and a new constitution hastily written by the coup leaders.

A bloc of West African nations suspended Mali's membership and is sending five presidents to "restore constitutional order" a week

after soldiers ousted the democratically elected leader. The Economic Community of West African States is also putting a peace-keeping force on standby, but thousands want the junta to stay.

"It's the first time I'm really proud of Mali and of Africa," said Niamey Toure, a doctor. "Honestly I'd given up on Mali. It's only now with the military that I've regained some hope."

The Associated Press

### Lock in over 4.00% interest!

CD-type annuities offer guaranteed returns, tax favored benefits and avoid market risk. Lock in over 4.00% for 10 years. Shorter durations are also available, according to John Douglass, annuity analyst. Call now! 800-700-4709

Call for state approval. Product has limitations. Guarantee based on issuer. Financial info provided.

