

# The Daily Telegraph

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**BRITAIN'S BEST - SELLING QUALITY DAILY**

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## 'God's rottweiler' is the new Pope

THOMAS COEX/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Joseph Ratzinger, who has taken the name Benedict XVI, salutes the waiting crowds in St Peter's Square yesterday after being elected as the 265th Pope in the fourth ballot of cardinals. He was a close confidant of John Paul II, his predecessor

### ■ Ratzinger, 78, elected in record time ■ Jubilant pilgrims hail Benedict XVI

By JONATHAN PETRE  
AND BRUCE JOHNSTON  
IN ROME

TO tumultuous cheers and applause, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, one of the most controversial figures in the modern Church, emerged on to the balcony of St Peter's yesterday as the 265th Pope.

In extraordinary scenes, the new leader of the world's one billion Roman Catholics immediately won the hearts of the tens of thousands of flag-waving pilgrims packed into the square by anointing his predecessor, John Paul II, as "great".

Speaking tearfully to chants of "Viva il Papa", he said: "Dear brothers and sisters, after the great John

Paul II the cardinals have chosen a simple and humble worker in the vineyard of Our Lord."

The sense of history and occasion in Rome was heightened by the huge media presence, with banks of television spotlights piercing the gloom over the Renaissance colonnades.

Tributes to the new Pope, who took the name Benedict XVI, poured in from all parts of the world, from President George W Bush and Kofi Annan, the United Nations secretary general, to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany and President Jacques Chirac of France.

His choice of the name of Benedict could indicate that he intends to be a reconciler. Pope Benedict XV, whose papacy (1914 to 1922) was overshadowed by the First World War, was seen as a bridge-builder.

However, the choice of the 78-year-old Bavarian was possibly the most contentious the cardinals could have made. While conservatives, particularly in Africa and Asia, will be delighted, many liberals in Europe and America will be dismayed.

But the speed of the conclave, one of the shortest in history, showed that the great majority of cardinals was united behind him.

Pope Benedict will maintain doctrinal continuity with his predecessor and his unbending stance on such issues as homosexuality, birth control and relations with other faiths, as well as his treatment of dissidents, could prove divisive.

Among his critics he has earned the sobriquet "God's rottweiler" but his supporters say he is a courteous, gentle man and an outstanding theologian with a deep sense of spirituality.

He became the front-runner after he impressed many of his fellow cardinals with his dignified celebration of John Paul II's funeral and his sermon on Monday in which he made a fervent defence of orthodoxy.

The name of the new Pope emerged after the fourth ballot of cardinals, who had been closeted in the Sistine Chapel for only a day. A plume of white smoke emerged from the famous chimney above the chapel at 5.50pm local time, causing pandemonium in the square. After

13 anxious minutes, the great bells began to peal, confirming the news. It was formally announced from the balcony in front of the central window of St Peter's Basilica by the senior cardinal deacon, the Chilean Cardinal Jorge Medina Estevez, flanked by two white cassocked clerics.

The cardinal stepped from behind voluminous velvet curtains and declared: "Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum. Habemus papam." (I announce to you news of great joy. We have a pope.) Having waited for

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## Howard promises to drop council tax revaluation

By GEORGE JONES  
POLITICAL EDITOR

THE Conservatives will open a new front in the election campaign today by promising to scrap Labour plans to reassess the value of every home in England for council tax payments.

The last revaluation was in 1991 when the average house cost £73,000. It now costs just under £180,000 and millions of homes would face higher council tax bills.

The revaluations are due in September next year, with bills being issued in April 2007. A revaluation has

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already been carried out in Wales resulting in one in three homes going up by one band or more.

The revaluation pledge coincides with the launch of the Conservative campaign for shire council elections in England. The Tories hope it will boost their campaign after the latest opinion polls showed Labour's lead increasing.

Michael Howard dismissed reports that shadow cabinet members had urged him to tone down the party's hard-line message on immigration

and asylum. The Conservative leader denied that he was fighting a single-issue campaign based on immigration. But he made clear that he would not change course, reaffirming his view that community relations could be damaged by uncontrolled immigration.

Although there is a sense of frustration that the party is not making a breakthrough in the polls, leading Tories denied there was any panic.

Mr Howard said last night that millions of families had been hit by soaring council tax. Labour's planned revaluation would mean even higher bills in England.

"So I am going to stop Mr Blair's next stealth tax by cancelling revaluation," he said. "There will be a clear choice at this election: higher taxes under Mr Blair or lower taxes with the Conservatives."

Trump card: Page 8



### Windmill alert

Building a huge wind farm across five miles of Lake District fells would set a dangerous precedent, it was claimed yesterday. Page 10

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## Loan rate may rise as inflation jumps

By MALCOLM MOORE  
ECONOMICS CORRESPONDENT

THE chances of an interest rate rise directly after the election increased substantially yesterday after figures showed that inflation hit a seven-year high in March.

Judged on the consumer price index, it rose to 1.9 per cent, just under the Bank of England's two per cent target. The Bank had not expected this level until next year.

Tony Blair played down the figures, saying: "We have got low levels of inflation by historic standards."

The Bank has postponed its next interest rate decision until May 9 so that it does not clash with the election. It will also issue its next quarterly inflation report next month.

Nick Verdi, an economist at Barclays Capital, said: "The reason the Bank has not already raised rates is because the data over the past couple

of months have been weak. These figures negate that."

He is predicting a rise of a quarter of a percentage point to five per cent next month.

Mark Richards, an economist at Lombard Street Research, said interest rates of at least five per cent were necessary but that the Bank might wait for more information on the property market before making a decision.

The Office for National Statistics said inflation had been pushed higher by a steep rise in air fares.

Because Easter was early this year, the seasonal rise in fares fell into March's statistics. The price of goods also rose for the first time in six years, but by only 0.1 per cent.

The pound rose by more than a cent against the dollar on expectations of higher interest rates, closing at \$1.9162, up from \$1.9038.

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