

April 11, 2008

## Chair Unveiled for Pope Benedict XVI's CUA Visit



**CUA's student designers gather around the chair with Jefferson Millwork volunteers. Also on hand were Architecture Dean Randall Ott (far left), CUA President Father O'Connell (far right, standing) and the students' faculty advisor, Visiting Assistant Professor Matthew Geiss (far right, kneeling.)**

Javid Farazad of Bethesda, Md., Doug Pettit of North Branford, Conn., and Christopher Fullam of Reading, Pa. Steen, Farazad and Fullam are undergraduates in the School of Architecture and Planning. Pettit is a candidate in the school's master's program.

The chair was built using a custom-fit joint, known as mortise and tenon, and not a single nail or screw was used in the process. Crafted from maple wood and accented with pommele sapele (an exotic mahogany), the chair has a clear finish and is upholstered in white leather. The designers relied on a series of horizontal and vertical lines to represent humanity's binds to Earth and God's place in heaven. It is meant to symbolize the pope's role as a bridge between Earth and heaven.

Four Catholic University architecture students today helped unveil the chair they designed for Pope Benedict XVI, who will sit in it when he addresses more than 400 U.S. Catholic education leaders next Thursday.

"The role of a chair in the Church and in the experience of a pope is very important," said the university's president, Very Rev. David M. O'Connell, C.M., speaking to the crowd gathered on Friday in the Edward J. Pryzbyla University Center for the unveiling. The Latin term "ex cathedra," Father O'Connell noted, literally means "from the chair," and is often synonymous with important papal pronouncements. "Pope Benedict XVI is going to speak not only to those gathered here but to all Catholics in our country — and he does so from this chair," said Father O'Connell.

The four CUA students who designed the chair are: Siobhan Steen, of Paris, France,

Michael Corrigan, president of Sterling, Va.'s Jefferson Millwork & Design Inc., and four of his colleagues, delivered the chair to Father O'Connell and spoke at the chair's unveiling. A team of seven Jefferson employees donated materials and labor, and worked nights and weekends to fabricate the chair from the students' design. Corrigan said that when the firm was solicited to participate in the fabrication: "It was a very quick decision — and then I called my mom."

Steen, Farazad, Pettit and Fullam will have the opportunity to see the chair put to use firsthand on Thursday. The four students were invited by Father O'Connell to attend Pope Benedict XVI's speech to Catholic educators.

"I can't wait to see him sit in it," Pettit said. "It's awesome — just as simple as that. I'm honored. I'm speechless."

**MEDIA:** For more information or to interview the student designers, contact Katie Lee or Mary McCarthy at 202-319-5600.



**Volunteers from Jefferson Millwork & Design Inc., unload the chair for the unveiling ceremony.**