

Pope remembers Steffie

By Markus Mannheim

HE MAY be the spiritual head of the world's largest Christian church, but a cousin of Pope Benedict XVI says that he is still a naughty boy to her.

Steffie Brzakovic, 78, of Cooma, received a call from her famous first cousin shortly after his election in a papal conclave in April.

It was the first time she had heard from him in more than 50 years.

Mrs Brzakovic, who was raised in the southern Germany city of Weilheim before moving to Australia in 1956, said she

But he's still just a naughty boy to me, says Cooma cousin

remembered Joseph Ratzinger as a young boy who was often up to no good.

"He was everywhere he shouldn't [have] been," she recalled yesterday, shaking her head. "When I think today of what we did, it's a wonder [that we] are alive."

When she received the phone call three months ago, she first

thought it was a prank. It wasn't until His Holiness told her it was "Ratzinger Pepi", referring to his childhood nickname, that she realised who was on the other end.

"I said, 'Are you the Pope?' and he [replied], 'But, for you, I am still the Ratzinger Pepi'."

Mrs Brzakovic was raised as a Roman Catholic, but became a

Jehovah's Witness in the 1970s.

She said that while her religious differences with her family had caused frustration, the Pope had encouraged her for following her faith.

"He told me, 'You are doing the work that we should do,'" she said, referring to her church's missionary work. "He said, 'You have halls [that are] not too big, but they are full. We have cathedrals, churches, chapels and they are empty.'"

Mrs Brzakovic is spending this weekend at a Jehovah's Witness convention in Canberra with about 3000 district worshippers.



A cousin of the Pope, Steffie Brzakovic, at the Jehovah's Witness convention. Photo: Martin Jones

Pontiff meets Muslims in push for better ties

By Alexandra Hudson

POPE Benedict met

council briefly met the pontiff in the residence of the archbishop of