

Church Doesn't Oppose Research, Says Pope

Recalls Natural Law Is Accessible to Non-Believers

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 15, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Church is not opposed to medical research, but seeks to offer a moral framework that is understandable for anyone who exercises right reason, Benedict XVI reminded the Vatican congregation he formerly led.

The Pope spoke about bioethics today when he addressed the plenary assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which is under way in Rome.

He took up two issues the congregation is considering: In addition to bioethics and medical ethics, the Holy Father also addressed the issue of ecumenical dialogue.

The first theme made up the bulk of his address. He stressed the importance of the congregation's 2008 instruction "Dignitas Personae."

"On such delicate topics of current importance, such as those that refer to procreation and the new therapeutic proposals that entail the manipulation of the embryo and of human genetic patrimony," the instruction affirms that "the ethical value of biomedical science is measured with reference both to the unconditional respect due to every human being, at all times of his existence, as well as to the protection of the specificity of the personal acts that transmit life," he said.

Benedict XVI denounced the mentality "according to which faith appears as an obstacle to freedom and scientific research, because supposedly it is made up of an ensemble of prejudices that vitiate the objective understanding of reality."

The Church's teaching on bioethical issues, he stressed, derives from the natural moral law, which is accessible to human reason, whether or not one is a believer.

"The natural moral law is not exclusively or predominantly confessional, although Christian Revelation and man's fulfillment in the mystery of Christ fully enlightens and develops its doctrine," the Pope explained. This law is "founded on human nature itself and accessible to every rational creature," and "it constitutes the basis to enter into dialogue with all men who seek the truth and, more generally, with civil and secular society."

Hence, Benedict XVI affirmed that the Christian faith "makes a real contribution in the ethical-

philosophical realm as well, not offering pre-constituted solutions to concrete problems, such as biomedical research and experimentation, but proposing viable moral perspectives within which human reason can seek and find valid solutions."

"In proposing moral valuations for biomedical research on human life, the Church calls [us] to the light both of reason and of faith," he declared.

Ecumenical challenges

Benedict XVI also spoke about challenges in ecumenism posed last year to the congregation by the situations with the Society of St. Pius X and the Anglican Communion.

The Pope emphasized his mission as a minister of unity, noting that this is, above all, unity of faith. He recalled how the Successor of Peter is charged with guarding and defending the sacred deposit of revelation.

"To attain the common testimony of the faith of all Christians is, therefore, the priority of the Church at all times, for the purpose of leading all men to the encounter with God," he said.

The Holy Father invited the congregation to continue working "so that the doctrinal problems that remain [with the Society of St. Pius X] will be overcome," enabling them to "attain the full communion of the Church."

The Pontiff also expressed his satisfaction with the congregation's commitment "in favor of the full integration of Anglican groups of faithful and individuals in the life of the Catholic Church."

"The faithful adherence of these groups to the truth received from Christ and proposed by the magisterium of the Church is in no way contrary to the ecumenical movement," he said. Instead, the Pope illustrated, these advances show the ultimate goal of ecumenism, "which consists in attaining the full and visible communion of the Lord's disciples."