

Pope Has Better Idea for Money Spent on Violence

Notes Waste of Resources That Could Be Used for Poor

VATICAN CITY, JAN. 11, 2010 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI is urging a decrease in military spending, especially on nuclear arms, saying these resources would be much better spent on the poor.

The Pope took up this theme today when he delivered his traditional New Year address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See.

The Holy Father's address for 2010 centered on the issue of respect for creation and the environment, the same theme he highlighted in his Jan. 1 World Day of Peace message.

He affirmed: "The denial of God distorts the freedom of the human person, yet it also devastates creation. It follows that the protection of creation is not principally a response to an aesthetic need, but much more to a moral need, in as much as nature expresses a plan of love and truth which is prior to us and which comes from God."

The Pontiff contended that "the protection of creation is indeed an important element of peace and justice!"

He continued: "Among the many challenges which it presents, one of the most serious is increased military spending and the cost of maintaining and developing nuclear arsenals. Enormous resources are being consumed for these purposes, when they could be spent on the development of peoples, especially those who are poorest."

Benedict XVI expressed his hope a conference in May on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty will bring "concrete decisions" for "progressive disarmament, with a view to freeing our planet from nuclear arms."

Perpetuating violence

The Bishop of Rome lamented how arms production and trade is perpetuating violence in some countries. He particularly mentioned the situations in Somalia and Congo.

But the Holy Father also chided the general public for indifference to these situations of violence.

"Together with the inability of the parties directly involved to step back from the spiral of violence and pain spawned by these conflicts, there is the apparent powerlessness of other countries and the international organizations to restore peace, to say nothing of the indifference, amounting practically to resignation, of public opinion worldwide," he said. "There is no need to insist on the extent to which such conflicts damage and degrade the environment."

And, returning to a theme he mentioned at the New Year's beginning, the Pontiff called for an end to terrorism, noting how it "endangers countless innocent lives and generates widespread anxiety."

Migration

Benedict XVI noted how these situations of conflict and violence "combined with the scourges of poverty, hunger, natural disasters and the destruction of the environment" are among the causes of emigration.

"Given the extent of this exodus, I wish to exhort the various civil authorities to carry on their work with justice, solidarity and foresight," he said.

The Pope emphasized the pressures to emigrate faced by Christians of the Middle East.

"Beleaguered in various ways, even in the exercise of their religious freedom, they are leaving the land of their forebears, where the Church took root during the earliest centuries," he noted.

The Holy Father said that next autumn's special assembly of the synod of bishops on the Middle East aims to "offer [these Christians] encouragement and to make them feel the closeness of their brothers and sisters in faith."