

DEVELOPMENT MUST NOT IGNORE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ISSUES

VATICAN CITY, MAY 1, 2007 (VIS) - Made public today was a Message from the Holy Father addressed to Mary Ann Glendon, president of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and to participants in the academy's 13th plenary assembly which was held in the Vatican from April 27 to May 1 on the theme: "Charity and Justice in the Relations among Peoples and Nations."

In his message, published in English and Italian, the Pope makes it clear that, according to "the principle of the universal destination of all the goods of creation, ... everything that the earth produces and all that man transforms and manufactures, all his knowledge and technology, is meant to serve the material and spiritual development and fulfillment of the human family and all its members."

The Holy Father goes on to identify "three specific challenges facing our world, challenges which I believe can only be met through a firm commitment to that greater justice which is inspired by charity.

"The first," he adds, "concerns the environment and sustainable development. The international community recognizes that the world's resources are limited and that it is the duty of all peoples to implement policies to protect the environment in order to prevent the destruction of that natural capital whose fruits are necessary for the well-being of humanity. ... Also needed is a capacity to assess and forecast, to monitor the dynamics of environmental change and sustainable growth, and to draw up and apply solutions at an international level."

"Indeed, if development were limited to the technical-economic aspect, obscuring the moral-religious dimension, it would not be an integral human development, but a one-sided distortion which would end up by unleashing man's destructive capacities."

The second challenge "involves our conception of the human person and consequently our relationships with one other. If human beings are not seen as persons, male and female, created in God's image and endowed with an inviolable dignity, it will be very difficult to achieve full justice in the world. Despite the recognition of the rights of the person in international declarations and legal instruments, much progress needs to be made in bringing this recognition to bear upon such global problems as the growing gap between rich and poor countries."

The third challenge "relates to the values of the spirit." Benedict XVI explains that, "unlike material goods, those spiritual goods which are properly human expand and multiply when communicated. Unlike divisible goods, spiritual goods such as knowledge and education are indivisible."

Having emphasized the urgent need for "a just equality of opportunity, especially in the field of education and the transmission of knowledge," the Pope laments the fact that "education, especially at the primary level, remains dramatically insufficient in many parts of the world.

"To meet these challenges," he concludes, "only love for neighbor can inspire within us justice at the service of life and the promotion of human dignity. Only love within the family, founded on a man and a woman, who are created in the image of God, can assure that inter-generational solidarity which transmits love and justice to future generations. Only charity can encourage us to place the human person once more at the center of life in society and at the center of a globalized world governed by justice."

MESS/CHARITY:JUSTICE/GLENDON
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