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30th December, 2009

140/2009

MESSAGE OF POPE BENEDICT XVI FOR THE WORLD DAY OF PEACE 2010

The Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the 43rd World Day of Peace, which will be celebrated on 1st January 2010, discusses the theme **'If you want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation'**.

In his Message, the Holy Father delves into many topical issues which affect the planet, and consequently, the well-being of humanity. While carrying out a careful reading of the signs of the times with regard to the natural environment, the Pope presents several proposals which are especially directed to those who exercise different kinds of social responsibility. As he had the opportunity to affirm in his encyclical 'Caritas in Veritate', the current Message reiterates that "integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from man's relationship with the natural environment".

Pope Benedict XVI highlights humanity's call to respect the natural environment and the concomitant duty to the development of an authentic ecological awareness. The Pope mentions several contemporary realities which are affecting our planet, such as climate change, desertification, the depletion of formerly extensive agricultural areas, the pollution of the Earth's different water bodies, massive deforestation and the troubling phenomenon of large scale migration by "environmental refugees".

The Message is based on each individual's duties towards others. In the long run, these duties have a bearing, immediate or remote, on the environment and on the well-being of the whole of humanity. Pope Benedict XVI is inviting us to reflect seriously on the contemporary challenges facing us, and to embrace our responsibilities – as individuals, communities and nations – to safeguard the gifts which God has given to all.

Addressing journalists, Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace said: "The Pope's Message invites us to reflect on a theme which should concern all humanity. This theme which is extremely relevant today, continues to develop adequately the 'Magisterium of Peace' that Pope Benedict XVI is giving us in his annual messages."

EXTRACTS FROM THE HOLY FATHER'S MESSAGE

Man's inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development - wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism, and violations of human rights. Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect - if not downright misuse - of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us. For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen "that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying".

In 1990 John Paul II had spoken of an "ecological crisis" and ... pointed to the "urgent moral need for a new solidarity". His appeal is all the more pressing today, in the face of signs of a growing crisis which it would be irresponsible not to take seriously. Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of "environmental refugees", people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it - and often their possessions as well - in order to face the dangers and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development.

The ecological crisis cannot be viewed in isolation from ... the notion of development itself and our understanding of man in his relationship to others and to the rest of creation. Prudence would thus dictate a profound, long-term review of our model of development, one which would take into consideration the meaning of the economy and its goals with an eye to correcting its malfunctions and misapplications. The ecological health of the planet calls for this, but it is also demanded by the cultural and moral crisis of humanity whose symptoms have for some time been evident in every part of the world.

Our present crises ... are ultimately also moral crises, and all of them are interrelated. They require us to rethink the path which we are travelling together. Specifically, they call for a lifestyle marked by sobriety and solidarity, with new rules and forms of engagement, one which focuses confidently and courageously on strategies that actually work, while decisively rejecting those that have failed. Only in this way can the current crisis become an opportunity for discernment and new strategic planning.

Environmental degradation is often due to the lack of far-sighted official policies or to the pursuit of myopic economic interests, which then, tragically, become a serious threat to creation. ... When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed - environmentally and socially - as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred. The international community and national governments are responsible for sending the right signals in order to combat effectively the

misuse of the environment. To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules, also from the juridical and economic standpoint, while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations.

A greater sense of inter-generational solidarity is urgently needed. ... Natural resources should be used in such a way that immediate benefits do not have a negative impact on living creatures, human and not, present and future; that the protection of private property does not conflict with the universal destination of goods; that human activity does not compromise the fruitfulness of the earth, for the benefit of people now and in the future.

There is an urgent moral need for a renewed sense of intra-generational solidarity, especially in relationships between developing countries and highly-industrialised countries. ... The ecological crisis shows the urgency of a solidarity which embraces time and space. It is important to acknowledge that among the causes of the present ecological crisis is the historical responsibility of the industrialised countries. Yet the less-developed countries, and emerging countries in particular, are not exempt from their own responsibilities with regard to creation, for the duty of gradually adopting effective environmental measures and policies is incumbent upon all. This would be accomplished more easily if self-interest played a lesser role in the granting of aid and the sharing of knowledge and cleaner technologies.

To be sure, among the basic problems which the international community has to address is that of energy resources and the development of joint and sustainable strategies to satisfy the energy needs of the present and future generations. This means that technologically advanced societies must be prepared to encourage more sober lifestyles, while reducing their energy consumption and improving its efficiency. At the same time there is a need to encourage research into, and utilisation of, forms of energy with lower impact on the environment and "a worldwide redistribution of energy resources, so that countries lacking those resources can have access to them".

A sustainable comprehensive management of the environment and the resources of the planet demands that human intelligence be directed to technological and scientific research and its practical applications. The "new solidarity" for which John Paul II called ... and the "global solidarity" for which I myself appealed in my Message for the 2009 World Day of Peace are essential attitudes in shaping our efforts to protect creation through a better internationally-coordinated management of the earth's resources, particularly today, when there is an increasingly clear link between combating environmental degradation and promoting integral human development.

There is a need, in effect, to move beyond a purely consumerist mentality in order to promote forms of agricultural and industrial production capable of respecting creation and satisfying the primary needs of all. The ecological problem must be dealt with not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real

motivation must be the quest for authentic worldwide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice and the common good.

It is becoming more and more evident that the issue of environmental degradation challenges us to examine our lifestyle and the prevailing models of consumption and production, which are often unsustainable from a social, environmental and even economic point of view. ... We are all responsible for the protection and care of the environment. This responsibility knows no boundaries. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity it is important for everyone to be committed at his or her proper level, working to overcome the prevalence of particular interests. A special role in raising awareness and in formation belongs to the different groups present in civil society and to the non-governmental organisations which work with determination and generosity for the spread of ecological responsibility, responsibility which should be ever more deeply anchored in respect for "human ecology".

The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of self-destruction. ... Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others. Hence I readily encourage efforts to promote a greater sense of ecological responsibility which, as I indicated in my Encyclical "Caritas in Veritate", would safeguard an authentic "human ecology" and thus forcefully reaffirm the inviolability of human life at every stage and in every condition, the dignity of the person and the unique mission of the family, where one is trained in love of neighbour and respect for nature.

On the other hand, a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutising nature or by considering it more important than the human person. If the Church's Magisterium expresses grave misgivings about notions of the environment inspired by eco-centrism and bio-centrism, it is because such notions eliminate the difference of identity and worth between the human person and other living things. In the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the "dignity" of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings. They also open the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism, which would see the source of man's salvation in nature alone, understood in purely naturalistic terms.

If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation. In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church's Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make. They contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ, who by His death and resurrection has reconciled with God "all things, whether on earth or in heaven".