

# Pope Urges Rethinking Church-State Relationship

Reminds France That Their Roots Are Christian

PARIS, SEPT. 12, 2008.- A new reflection of the relationship between Church and State needs to take into account not only the need to protect religious freedom, but also the contribution faith can make to society, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope said this today when meeting with French politicians at the Elysée Palace. He is currently visiting Paris, and will travel to Lourdes on Saturday to mark the 150th anniversary of the Marian apparitions to Bernadette Soubirous.

France, the Holy Father said, "boasts a history of 1,000 years, a present marked by a wealth of activity and a future of promise."

"France is often at the heart of the Pope's prayers," he continued. "He cannot forget all that she has contributed to the Church in the course of 20 centuries!"

"The roots of France -- like those of Europe -- are Christian," the Pontiff said. "History itself offers sufficient proof of this: From its origins, your country received the Gospel message."

Benedict XVI made reference to President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Rome last December, during which the leader of France discussed a vision of "positive secularity" in an address at the Basilica of St. John Lateran.

The Pope said that while there are many reflections on the relationship that should exist between the Church and the state, "Christ had already offered the basic criterion upon which a just solution to the problem."

"He does this when," the Pontiff explained, "in answer to a question, he said: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.'"

The Holy Father continued: "At this moment in history when cultures continue to cross paths more frequently, I am firmly convinced that a new reflection on the true meaning and importance of "laïcité" [secularity] is now necessary.

"In fact, it is fundamental, on the one hand, to insist on the distinction between the political realm and that of religion in order to preserve both the religious freedom of citizens and the responsibility of the state toward them; and, on the other hand, to become more aware of the irreplaceable role of religion for the formation of consciences and the contribution which it can bring to -- among other things -- the creation of a basic ethical consensus within society."

Source: [www.Zenit.org](http://www.Zenit.org)