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Society Has to Agree on Basic Values, Says Pope

Speaks With Muslims About Inalienable Rights Rooted in Human Nature

BERLIN, SEPT. 23, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Recognizing inalienable rights rooted in human nature is the common ground needed for a pluralistic society, Benedict XVI told a group of Muslims today.

The Pope said this on the second day of his four-day trip to Germany, where he is visiting as an official guest of the state. This is his third trip to his homeland as Pope.

The Holy Father noted that the importance Muslims give to life's religious dimension is "thought provocative" given a "society that tends to marginalize religion or at most to assign it a place among the individual's personal choices."

He affirmed that the Church, too, is a firm advocate of "due recognition" for the "public dimension of religious adherence."

"In an overwhelmingly pluralist society, this demand is not unimportant," the Pontiff said.

"Care must be taken to guarantee that others are always treated with respect," he added. "Mutual respect grows only on the basis of agreement on certain inalienable values that are proper to human nature, in particular the inviolable dignity of every single person. Such agreement does not limit the expression of individual religions; on the contrary, it allows each person to bear witness explicitly to what he believes, not avoiding comparison with others."

Solid foundations

Referring to the constitutional law of Germany, he noted that it is still valid some 60 years after it was signed even though the nation has gone from a majority Christian one, to a religiously pluralistic society.

"The reason for this seems to me to lie in the fact that the fathers of the Basic Law at that important moment were fully conscious of the need to find particularly solid ground with which all citizens would be able to identify," he reflected. "In seeking this, they did not prescind from their own religious beliefs; indeed for many of them, the real source of inspiration was the Christian vision of man. But they knew they had to engage with the followers of other religions and none: common ground was found in the recognition of some inalienable rights that are proper to human nature and precede every positive formulation."

The Pope said this foundation points out the limits of pluralism: "It is inconceivable, in fact, that a society could survive in the long term without consensus on fundamental ethical values."

In the context of all of this, the Holy Father suggested that Muslims and Christians have room for "fruitful collaboration." He highlighted in particular "the protection of the family based on marriage, respect for life in every phase of its natural course or the promotion of greater social justice."

Explaining Assisi

Benedict XVI offered reasoning for the day of reflection that will be held in Assisi next month, gathering representatives of all the major world religions, as well as unbelievers.

"Through this gathering," he explained, "we wish to express, with simplicity, that we believers have a special contribution to make towards building a better world, while acknowledging that if our actions are to be effective, we need to grow in dialogue and mutual esteem."

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