

ZE09122213 - 2009-12-22

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-27925?l=english>

BENEDICT XVI WARNS AGAINST SECULARIZATION

Says Environmental Work Should Include Value for Persons

VATICAN CITY, DEC. 22, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is urging Finland, and all of Europe, to cling to values promoted by religious groups lest they disappear through secularization.

The Pope stated this Thursday when he met with the new ambassador from Finland to the Holy See, Alpo Rusi.

"A vital contribution that all religious groups can offer in your country, as elsewhere in Europe, is to draw attention to certain values that are in danger of being eroded through the process of secularization," the Pontiff affirmed.

He acknowledged the "pressures that governments face when presented with insistent demands from some quarters, in the name of tolerance, for acceptance of an ever wider range of viewpoints and lifestyles."

However, the Holy Father stated that "the virtue of tolerance is not served by the sacrifice of truth, particularly the truth concerning the dignity of the human person."

He urged the Finnish authorities to "continue to take note of the ethical perspectives based upon the natural law indelibly inscribed in our common humanity."

In this way, Benedict XVI said, "Finland's long-standing esteem for the family and respect for life may shape its response to delicate social issues with long-term implications for the health of any human society."

Better world

That same day, the Pope met with the envoys of seven other nations, including Hans Klingenberg, the new ambassador from Denmark to the Holy See.

In his address to the Danish representative, the Pontiff acknowledged the two-week U.N. summit on climate change that took place this month in Denmark.

"Courage and sacrifice, fruits of an ethical awakening, enable us to envisage a better world and embolden us to pursue with hope all that is necessary to ensure that future generations are bequeathed the whole of creation in such a condition that they too can call it home," he said.

Recalling a recent address he gave to the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Holy Father stated that "development plans, investments and legislation are not enough;" rather, "individuals and communities must change their behavior."

He continued, "For states themselves this includes a redefining of the concepts and principles that have hitherto governed international relations to include the principle of altruism and the resolve to seek out new parameters -- ethical as well as juridical and economic -- capable of building relationships of greater fairness and balance between developing and developed countries."

Benedict XVI highlighted a "holistic understanding of the health of society" in which "our duties toward the environment are never detached from our duties toward the human person."

In this model, he added, "a moral critique of the cultural norms shaping human coexistence, with particular concern for the young, is considered central to the well-being of society."

The Pope observed that "often efforts to promote an integral understanding of the environment have had to sit alongside a reductionist understanding of the person."

This understanding of the person, he said, typically "is lacking in respect for the spiritual dimension of individuals."

As well, the Pontiff said, it is sometimes "hostile toward the family, pitting spouses against each other through a distorted portrayal of the complementarity of men and women, and pitting mother and unborn child against each other through a misconstrued portrayal of 'reproductive health.'"

He affirmed that "responsibility in relationships, including the responsibility of careful parenting, can never be truly nurtured without profound respect for the unity of family life according to the loving design of our Creator."

--- --- ---

On ZENIT's Web page:

Benedict XVI's address to Finnish ambassador: <http://zenit.org/article-27919?l=english>

Benedict XVI's address to Danish ambassador: <http://zenit.org/article-27918?l=english>