



CULTURE MUST EARN ITS NAME, SAYS HOLY SEE

Without Respect for Man, Falls Short of Title

PARIS, OCT. 22, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- A culture doesn't deserve to be called such if it is not based on respect for the person, the Holy See is reminding the United Nations.

This was affirmed by Monsignor Francesco Follo, the Holy See representative at the 35th general conference of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which concludes Friday. The monsignor's intervention was given Oct. 10 and published today by the Holy See.

"What is man? This is a vast and complex question to which every truly human culture must submit itself and to which it must respond," said the prelate.

The answer to this question, which should transcend all barriers, "cannot be other than man in his truth," he explained, as, for example, every man's right to be born.

"Let us avoid, therefore, speaking of these rights without being aware and without making reference to the fact that they are rooted in profound respect for the total man, from his conception to his natural death. A culture can consider itself noble only on the basis of its capacity to apprehend man in his truth and to acknowledge the rights linked to the truth of his being," Monsignor Follo added.

In this connection, the Holy See representative challenged UNESCO to see that "each culture not be shut in on itself," but to "make it understood that every culture always lives in interaction" with other cultures, and that culture is an event more than an established and acquired fact."

Economic crisis

The prelate referred to a passage of the encyclical "Caritas in Veritate," which, given "the complexity and gravity of the present economic situation," invites people to assume "the new responsibilities to which we are called by the situation of a world that needs to renew itself."

He stressed that "it is important to be aware of the fact that the economy is at the service of man. It is man and culture that the economy must serve."

Monsignor Follo affirmed that "culture -- that is, man's access to his full humanity -- is not a luxury reserved only to prosperous economies."

He said culture is found "where men are concerned with truth and seek it."

Hence the monsignor called for greater "respect of one culture for another, and above all respect for man, who is lord and subject of culture."

On the other hand, he appealed for a re-evaluation of philosophy, "unfortunately considered too often as the most useless of the disciplines because it is the freest of particular and partisan interests."

"Instead, it is a useful and indispensable discipline because it is particularly at the service of man and, hence, of the good of the whole of humanity," Monsignor Follo contended. "By promoting everything that contributes to the growth of the dignity of man, of his mind and of his intelligence, UNESCO will be faithful to its vocation and to its lofty mission."