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CHURCH PRESERVES GLOBAL PATRIMONY, SAYS OFFICIAL

Notes Universal Mission Beyond National Groups

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 30, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- There is a Vatican commission with the "daily and dense" task of helping to preserve the cultural heritage not just of one nation, but of the whole world.

The secretary of the commission, Francesco Buranelli, explained this at a press conference Saturday to mark the 20th anniversary of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church.

Buranelli explained how Pope John Paul II's 1988 apostolic constitution "Pastor Bonus" "had the far-sighted cultural vision to institute a structure to which to entrust the protection of the treasures of the Church in the world."

The "exceptional nature" of the commission, he said, is in the "value of universality," because it is not a dicastery "linked to territorial or national limits," but "refers to the Church's own vocation to preserve, protect and value all cultural goods recognized as the patrimony of Christianity."

"It is a daily and dense activity," observed Buranelli, stressing the particular importance given to the preparation of documents and to contact with international organizations "to spread ever greater awareness of the role and specific value of the religious cultural patrimony, particularly the Christian, within the cultural patrimony of each nation and, in consequence, in the worldwide patrimony of humanity."

Befriending art

Buranelli also discussed the Church's relationship today with the world of art.

He said that it is important to continue along a complex and sometimes difficult path that will bring society to "become aware again of its own cultural roots and to reacquire the capacity to see the invisible."

The Vatican official noted how the Holy See will participate in the 53rd International Art Exhibit in Venice in 2010.

He said that "the moment is ripe for the Church to courageously assume again the role of inspirer and sponsor, which for centuries characterized the labor of evangelization."

"The Church will have to begin from here to be based again in that dialogue with art and on art that for centuries saw her at the center of the cultural debate and which seems to have weakened -- to the point of being lost in trivialities and discord -- in the course of the last two centuries," Buranelli proposed.

The Church "must not fear this friendship" with art, he said. And he contended that this renewed relationship must come from the top down -- such as with the Pontiff's meeting with artists this month; and from the bottom up -- at the level of religious institutions acting on initiatives.

This means to promote ideas such as attention from local Churches on artists present in their own territory, the establishment of diocesan commissions of contemporary religious art and the creation of conditions so that "the artist [...] can address theology and a profound knowledge of Christian rites and symbols and that on entering a church he is able to perceive what the 'sacred' is, which his art is called to make alive in the heart of believers," Buranelli said.

He added, "Only in this way will ecclesial patronage be able to come out of the easy short cuts of 'serial' productions, and artists feel inspired again by the subject of the relation with the Inexpressible and be able, by addressing perhaps the highest subject that the human mind has conceived, to grow in their path of art."