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## Vatican: Traveling a "Privileged Event"

### Underlines Positive Value of Knowing Different Cultures

VATICAN CITY, JULY 8, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Vatican is calling tourism a "privileged event" as it offers an opportunity for dialogue among the cultures that come into contact with one another.

This was stated in the message of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers for the 2011 World Tourism Day, which will be observed Sept. 27 with the theme "Tourism Linking Cultures."

The message, released Wednesday, was signed by Archbishop Antonio Maria Vegliò and Bishop Joseph Kalathiparambil, president and secretary of the dicastery, respectively.

World Tourism Day is promoted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and began to be celebrated in 1980.

The dicastery's message highlighted the role of tourism in favoring "dialogue, as it places one in contact with other places, traditions, manners of living, and other forms of seeing the world and conceiving history."

"For all of these reasons, tourism is certainly a privileged event," the message added.

The letter noted that "the meeting of different cultures permits an enrichment of each one's own reality," and urged those responsible for the pastoral care of tourists to "educate and prepare Christians so that these cultural encounters are productive [...] and not lost opportunities."

If done correctly, the note said, tourism can "truly serve as a personal enrichment, helping to know the other, and to know one's self."

### Church's patrimony

Regarding the Church's "immense" cultural patrimony, the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers stated that its works of art are expressions of "the experience of faith, of the encounter between culture and the Gospel, as the fruit of the profound religious experience of the Christian community."

"Certainly," the note added, "the works of art and historical memory have an enormous potential to evangelize, in as much as they are placed in the context of [...] the way of beauty."

"It must be an objective priority of our pastoral care of tourism to show the true meaning of this cultural heritage, born from faith and for the glory of God," the letter added. "It is therefore important that we present this patrimony in its authenticity, illustrating its true religious nature, placing it in the liturgical context in which and for which it was born."

The letter then proposed "a series of concrete pastoral initiatives" that would seek to illustrate "in a clear and accessible way the original and profound religious meaning of these cultural manifestations, using for this modern and attractive means, and taking advantage of the personal and technological resources that are at our disposal."

"Among these concrete proposals there is the elaboration of the idea of touristic travel offering visitation to the places that are most important in the religious and cultural patrimony of the diocese," the message stated. Other initiatives including extending the hours that museums and churches are open, as well as formation programs for tourist guides.

At the end of the note, the dicastery announced the VII World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Tourism, which will take place April 23-27 in Cancun, Mexico.

This event, it said, "will certainly be an important opportunity to continue the consideration of concrete proposals that the pastoral care of tourism requires in the present times."

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