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POPE STRESSES RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF ECOLOGY

Says Nature Is Expression of God's Love for Mankind

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, SEPT. 10, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is calling for a discovery of the spiritual and religious dimensions in the defense of the environment and nature.

The Pope affirmed this today at Castel Gandolfo when he received a group of sponsors of the Holy See's Pavilion at the 2008 Zaragoza Expo, an international exposition held in Spain last year on the theme, "Water and Sustainable Development."

The exposition brought together some 130 participants from various countries, autonomous communities and businesses to demonstrate their proposals in relation to water and sustainable development.

The Holy See's booth offered a reflection on the divine and human elements of water. One of its main attractions was the last work of art completed by El Greco, "The Baptism of Christ." Thirty-eight other works were also displayed.

The Pontiff recalled how the pavilion "was one of the most visited and appreciated" and "contained an important display of the priceless artistic, cultural and religious heritage of the Church."

The pavilion received a total of 453,168 visitors over 93 days of the exposition.

"The aim of this initiative," he affirmed, "was to offer the many visitors an opportunity to reflect upon the significance and primordial importance water has for human life."

The Holy Father explained that the Holy See participated in the exposition to "demonstrate not only the urgent need constantly to defend the environment and the natural world, but also to discover its more profound spiritual and religious dimension."

Something more

"Today more than ever," the Pope said, "people must be helped to see in creation something more than a simple source of wealth or exploitation in man's hands."

He continued, "The truth is that when God, through creation, gave man the keys to the earth, he wanted him to use this great gift responsibly and respectfully, making it fruitful."

"The human being discovers the intrinsic value of nature if he learns to see it for what it really is, the expression of a plan of love and truth that speaks to us of the Creator and of his love for humanity, which will find its fulfillment in Christ, at the end of time," the Pontiff affirmed.

"In this context," Benedict XVI stated, "it is important to reiterate the close relationship between protection of the environment and respect for the ethical requirements of human nature, because when human ecology is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits."

The Pope entrusted his listeners to Our Lady of Pilar "at whose feet flow the abundant waters of the River Ebro."

Archbishop Manuel Ureña Pastor of Zaragoza was among those in the Papal audience, as well as the Spanish ambassador to the Holy See, Francisco Vázquez.