

# Pope Meets With Australian and Korean Leaders

## G-8 Participants Making Way to Rome

VATICAN CITY, JULY 9, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://Zenit.org)).- As the Group of Eight summit is under way in L'Aquila through Friday, select leaders are making their way to Rome to greet Benedict XVI.

A Vatican communiqué reported that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd of Australia and President Lee Myung-Bak of the Republic of Korea both met with the Pope today, and both subsequently met with the Holy Father's secretary of state, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone.

During Rudd's audience with the Holy Father, "mention was made of the Holy Father's trip to Sydney in July 2008 for World Youth Day, recollecting the great spirit of collaboration between the ecclesiastical and civil authorities that characterized the organization of that event."

"Attention also focused on the current international and regional situation, with reference to both respect for religious liberty and environmental problems," the note added.

After the audience, Rudd spoke to the press and commented on the meeting. Among other things, the prime minister related how he told the Pope that he was reading the newly published encyclical "Caritas in Veritate." The Holy Father had already planned to give the Australian leader a signed copy as a gift.

Rudd also mentioned to Benedict XVI the "inspiration that many Australians feel at the example of Blessed Mary MacKillop" (1842-1909). The religious, who founded the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, could be the first Australian saint.

"The Holy Father showed great interest and remembers well his visit to her tomb in Sydney last year," the prime minister said.

Rudd also visited the tomb of Pope John Paul II in the Vatican Grottoes.

## Korea

During President Lee's audience, the two spoke of the political situation of the Korean peninsula.

North Korea has put the peninsula at the center of world attention by conducting a nuclear test in May, and several ballistic missile launches since April.

According to a Vatican communiqué, the 30-minute "cordial discussions provided an opportunity for an exchange of ideas on certain themes of common interest, among them the effects of the world economic crisis, especially on the poorest countries, and the political and social situation on the Korean peninsula."

At the G-8 meeting on Wednesday, the leaders condemned "in the strongest terms" North Korea's actions, adding that they "pose a danger to peace and stability in the region and beyond."

"At a bilateral level, mention was made of the good relations that exist between the Republic of Korea and the Holy See, as well as of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, and of co-operation between Church and State in the educational and social fields."

The Pope also gave the president a signed copy of "Caritas in Veritate."

In a break with protocol, Lee's wife accompanied him in a white dress, the color that in Korea symbolizes peace. Vatican protocol reserves this color for Catholic queens, and all other women are to dress in black.

The visit was the third time a president of the Republic of Korea visited the Pope.

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