

ZE09112006 - 2009-11-20

Permalink: <http://www.zenit.org/article-27618?l=english>

# POPE: HUMANITY MUST BE HEALED OF SPIRITUAL DEAFNESS

## Urges Hearing Impaired to Actively Participate in Church

VATICAN CITY, NOV. 20, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Humanity needs to be saved from spiritual deafness, which blocks out the voices of God and one's neighbor, Benedict XVI says.

The Pope used this metaphor when he spoke today to participants in an international conference sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry.

The event's theme was "Ephphata: the Deaf Person in the Life of the Church," and it aimed to consider ways in which the Church could better serve some 1.3 million Catholic deaf people.

"[There is a] deafness of the spirit, which raises ever higher barriers to the voices of God and of neighbor -- especially the cry for help from the least ones and those who suffer -- and which encloses man in a profound and corrosive egoism," the Holy Father said.

He recalled Jesus' gesture in the Gospel account of the healing of the man who could not hear or speak. In this sign is seen "Jesus' ardent desire to overcome loneliness and incommunicability in man created by egoism, to give face to a 'new humanity,' a humanity of listening and of the word, of dialogue, of communication, of communion with God," the Pontiff said.

He explained that this new humanity must be "without discriminations, without exclusions [...] so that the world will be truly for all a 'field of genuine fraternity.'"

For the poor

Benedict XVI acknowledged that there is still today "a culture never surmounted, marked by prejudices and discriminations, concretely toward deaf people."

"These are deplorable and unjustifiable attitudes, because they are contrary to respect for the dignity of the non-hearing person and his or her full social integration," he said.

The Pontiff also mentioned "the serious situation that [the deaf] still endure in developing countries, both because of the lack of appropriate policies and legislation, as well as the difficulty in having access to primary health care."

"Deafness, in fact, is often a consequence of illnesses that are easily curable," the Pope lamented. And he appealed "to political and civil authorities, in addition to international organizations, to offer the necessary support to promote in [developing] countries as well, the due respect for the dignity and rights of non-hearing persons, fostering, with adequate aid, their full social integration."

## Evangelizing

In this connection, Benedict XVI said that the Church, already since the 18th century, has supported initiatives to care for the deaf.

The Holy Father further affirmed that the deaf must not only be considered "recipients" of evangelization, but "evangelizers" and active participants in the life of their communities.

"Following the example of her divine Founder," the Pope concluded, "the Church continues to support different pastoral and social initiatives for their benefit with love and solidarity, reserving special attention to those who suffer, aware that precisely in suffering is hidden a special strength that brings man interiorly closer to Christ, a particular grace."