



POPE STRESSES CHURCH'S ROLE IN CIVIC LIFE

Says Freedom Is Gift and Responsibility

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 2, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is emphasizing the Church's role in educating and forming consciences of citizens, as a positive and real contribution to civic life and public discourse.

The Pope affirmed this today in an audience with Miguel Humberto Díaz, the new ambassador from the United States to the Holy See.

The Pontiff recalled "with pleasure" his meeting with U.S. President Barack Obama last July, and expressed his confidence that the diplomatic relations "will continue to be marked by fruitful dialogue and cooperation in the promotion of human dignity."

He also recalled his pastoral visit to the United States last year, and noted the "vibrant democracy" that he observed there, "committed to the service of the common good and shaped by a vision of equality and equal opportunity based on the God-given dignity and freedom of each human being."

The Holy Father underlined this vision that is "enshrined in the nation's founding documents," which inspires "a cohesive yet pluralistic society constantly enriched by the gifts brought by new generations."

He continued, "In recent months, the reaffirmation of this dialectic of tradition and originality, unity and diversity has recaptured the imagination of the world, many of whose peoples look to the American experience and its founding vision in their own search for viable models of accountable democracy and sound development in an increasingly interdependent and global society."

Benedict XVI affirmed that the cultivation of the values of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" must now be "viewed from the higher perspective of the common good of the whole human family," rather remaining on an individual or national level.

He added, "The continuing international economic crisis clearly calls for a revision of present political, economic and financial structures in the light of the ethical imperative of ensuring the integral development of all people."

"What is needed," the Pope observed, "in effect, is a model of globalization inspired by an authentic humanism, in which the world's peoples are seen not merely as neighbors but as brothers and sisters."

Inseparable links

Freedom, which "Americans rightly hold dear," is a gift, and also a "summons to personal responsibility," he stated.

The Pontiff continued: "The preservation of freedom is inseparably linked to respect for truth and the pursuit of authentic human flourishing.

"The crisis of our modern democracies calls for a renewed commitment to reasoned dialogue in the discernment of wise and just policies respectful of human nature and human dignity."

He underlined the Church's role in the United States, as contributing to this discernment through education and the formation of consciences.

In this way, the Church "makes a significant and positive contribution to American civic life and public discourse," the Holy Father pointed out.

He added, "Here I think particularly of the need for a clear discernment with regard to issues touching the protection of human dignity and respect for the inalienable right to life from the moment of conception to natural death."

As well, Benedict XVI affirmed the need for the Church's guidance on issues such as "the

protection of the right to conscientious objection on the part of health care workers, and indeed all citizens."

In this regard, he underlined the "unbreakable link between an ethics of life and every other aspect of social ethics."