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TONY BLAIR: SOCIETY NEEDS TO GIVE SPACE TO FAITH

Former British Prime Minister Addresses Rimini Meeting

RIMINI, Italy, AUG. 28, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Britain's former prime minister, Tony Blair, believes that "to be harmonious, a society must leave room for faith."

Addressing some 15,000 people Thursday at the "Meeting for Friendship Between Peoples," organized by the ecclesial movement Communion and Liberation in the Italian coastal city of Rimini, Blair revealed aspects of his conversion to Catholicism.

In fact, he said, when he was "preparing to enter the Catholic Church, he had the feeling he was returning home."

His conversion, he added, was made easier by his wife; moreover, he realized that the Catholic Church was his home not "only because of its doctrine and magisterium, but because of its universal nature."

In the course of his address, the founder of the Faith Foundation quoted Benedict XVI's recent encyclical "Caritas in Veritate" several times, and said that it was "worthwhile reading and re-reading it; it is a counter-attack to relativism."

He also highlighted the encyclical's message, which affirms that without God man would not know where to go, considering that it is of vital importance for a globalized world such as today's.

If a globalized world is not to be dominated by power, it must have a counter-weight that seeks the common good, he stressed.

In this connection, Blair explained that the universal Church, which is a model of a

global institution, must come into play to address the problems posed by globalization.

In regard to the challenges of a multi-cultural society, Blair acknowledged that globalization makes us meet more people, but it is necessary to keep our characteristic identity.

It is necessary "to respect the Judeo-Christian roots of the countries of Europe. We must also call for respect for the identity of our countries, which has been formed in the course of millennia."

According to Blair, religion is often seen "as a source of conflict and we must demonstrate that faith is committed to building justice."

"In this way, we will show the real face of God, who is love and compassion," he added.

"Faith is not a form of superstition, but salvation for man. It is not a fleeing from life. Faith and reason are allied, never in opposition. Faith and reason support one another, reinforce each other, do not compete. That is why the voice of the Church is listened to, the voice of faith must always be listened to. That is our mission for the 21st century."

He also referred to the question of the process of peace in the Middle East and stated that "Israel must have its security guaranteed and Palestinians must be able to have an independent State."

Blair ended his addresses affirming "it would be a great sign of reconciliation and hope if the Holy Land were a place for reconciliation and peace."