

POPE WANTS TO DIALOGUE WITH ATHEISTS, SAYS PRELATE

Holy See Is Rigorously Dealing With Pedophile Priests

VALENCIA, Spain, APRIL 14, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is working to further the dialogue between faith and reason, and thus is conversing with atheist thinkers and artists, said the president of the Pontifical Council for Culture.

Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi stated this Tuesday during a press conference in Valencia, the diocesan news agency Avan reported.

The prelate, who is in Spain to inaugurate the Fides et Ratio Chair of the Catholic University of Valencia, explained that his Vatican dicastery is under taking many initiatives in this regard.

For example, he explained that when the Pope visits Portugal in May, he will meet with various Portuguese artists, among them the film director Manoel de Oliveira.

As well, the archbishop noted, a gathering is being planned for architects, including Santiago Calatrava of Valencia, who was one of the 300 artists from around the world who attended a meeting with Benedict XVI in the Sistine Chapel last November.

Archbishop Ravasi reported that the pontifical council is also organizing a series of meetings at UNESCO's headquarters in the University of Paris and in the French Academy, through the Courtyard of the Gentiles, an institution created by his own dicastery to stimulate dialogue with the atheist realm.

The prelate added that he is planning to meet with a non-believing Spanish intellectual to reflect on the dialogue between faith and culture. He noted that this meeting will most likely take place in November, around the time that the Holy Father will be visiting Santiago de Compostela and Barcelona in Spain.

Archbishop Ravasi affirmed that Christianity "always has a function within culture," although in some of its expressions the latter "might be completely secular."

Religion addresses "the fundamental answers" to the questions that "all men have about life, death, pain, justice and truth," he affirmed.

Pedophilia

Asked by journalists to comment on cases of sexual abuse of minors by priests, Archbishop Ravasi acknowledged that the issues are "grave."

He affirmed that the Holy See "is treating the matter with much rigor."

After explaining the measures adopted in these cases, the prelate lamented some the media's attacks against Benedict XVI, which he called "excessive" and "almost aggressive."

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