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Benedict XVI Warns That We Can Make Earth a Hell

Reminds Interreligious Meeting That the Human Condition Bounds Us to Coexist

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, SEPT. 14, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- We can make the planet into a hell by failing to accept one another, or we can learn to live together, open up and give ourselves, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope offered this reflection in a message to an interreligious [meeting](#) that concluded Tuesday in Munich. The event was sponsored by the Catholic lay Community of Sant'Egidio.

"The theme of the peace meeting, 'Bound to live together,' reminds us that we as human beings are bound to each other. This living together is in fact a precondition that derives from our being human. And it is our duty to give it a positive content," the Holy Father said in his message.

He reflected that living together can "transform itself into living against one another." It "can become a hell if we do not learn to accept one another, if everyone only wants to be himself or herself."

"But," the Holy Father continued, "it can also be a gift when we open up to one another, when we give ourselves to one another."

He proposed that religious and cultural coexistence should be seen as a "task and a gift" so as to find the "true way to live together."

Benedict XVI also pointed out that this coexistence is no longer a regional or local challenge, but now exists at a global scale, involving humanity as a whole.

Letting our neighbor in

The Pope said that the Christian faith teaches that God wants all of humanity to be, in fact, a family, "in which we are brothers and sisters for one another."

But this is a lesson, he said, that must be learned over and over: "We have to learn not to live next to one another but with one another. That means opening our hearts to one another, letting our neighbors participate in our joys, hopes, and sorrows."

The Pontiff went on to say that religion is "essentially linked to the question of peace."

"When religion fails in this meeting with God, when it pulls him down to us instead of raising us up to him, when we, so to say, make him our possession, then it can contribute to the destruction of peace," he cautioned. "But if it finds the way to the divine, to the creator and redeemer of all people, then it is a force for peace."

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On ZENIT's Web page:

Full text: www.zenit.org/article-33430?l=english

On the Net:

Munich meeting: www.santegidio.org/index.php?pageID=2396&idLng=1064