

STATES MUST ENSURE THAT LEGISLATION DOES NOT INCREASE SOCIAL INEQUALITY

Vatican City, 4 May 2012 (VIS) - This morning in the Vatican, Benedict XVI received five new non resident ambassadors to the Holy See: Teshome Toga Chanaka of Ethiopia, David Cooney of Ireland, Naivakarurubalavu Solo Mara of the Republic of Fiji, Vigen Tchitetchian of Armenia and Dato' Ho May Young, the first ambassador of Malaysia to the Holy See.

Excerpts from the Holy Father's French-language address to the diplomats is given below:

"The development of the communications media has, in some way, made our planet smaller. ... Awareness of the great suffering caused throughout the world by both material and spiritual poverty calls people to mobilise in order to face, in justice and solidarity, all threats to human beings, society and the environment".

"Exodus to the great cities, armed conflict, hunger and pandemics, which affect so many people, give rise to new forms of poverty in our time. The global economic crisis has caused an increasing number of families to live in precarious conditions. When the manufacture and increase of needs leads us to believe in the possibility of unlimited enjoyment and consumption, the lack of the means necessary to achieve these ends leads to frustration. ... When poverty coexists with enormous wealth, a sense of injustice arises which can become a source of rebellion. Therefore it is necessary for States to ensure that legislation does not increase social inequality and that people can live dignified lives".

"The development to which all nations aspire must involve human beings in their entirety, not just economic factors. ... Experiences such as micro-credit, and initiatives to create cooperative associations show that it is possible to harmonise economic objectives with social necessities, democratic government and respect for nature. It is also advisable to encourage manual work and to promote an agriculture which works in favour of local people, viewing these activities with the respect they deserve".

"In order to strengthen the human factor of social and political life, attention must be given to another kind of poverty: the loss of reference to spiritual values and to God. This defect makes it more difficult to distinguish good from evil, and to overcome personal interests in favour of the common good. States have a duty to promote their cultural and religious heritage, which contributes to the development of a nation, and to facilitate people's access thereto, because by familiarising ourselves with our history each of us is able to discover the roots of our own existence".

"Religion helps us to recognise others as brothers and sisters in humanity. Giving everyone the opportunity to know God, in complete freedom, is to help them forge a strong personality which will enable them to bear witness to good, and put it into effect even at great cost. In this way we will build a society in which sobriety and fraternity triumph over misery, indifference and selfishness, over exploitation and waste and, above all, over exclusion".

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