

Vatican stress on environment in Peace Day theme

John L. Allen Jr. | Jul. 29, 2009 NCR Today

In yet another sign of growing environmental advocacy under Pope Benedict XVI, the Vatican announced this morning that the theme of its World Peace Day in 2010 will be, "If you want to cultivate peace, take care of creation."

According to a statement released this morning, the thrust of Benedict XVI's message for the next World Peace Day will be that promoting peace in the world requires resolving what the Vatican referred to as "the present ecological crisis."

The Vatican cited several environmental challenges:

- * Over-use of natural resources
- * Climate change
- * New developments in biotechnology
- * Demographic trends

"Care of the environment must constitute a challenge for all humanity," the statement said. "It's a matter of a duty, common and universal, to respect a collective good."

World Peace Day was launched by the Catholic Church in 1967 under Pope Paul VI, in an effort to promote awareness of teaching on peace contained in the encyclical letters *Pacem in Terris* of Pope John XXIII and *Populorum Progressio* of Pope Paul VI. Paul VI chose to mark the event on January 1 on the theory that because it was not a specifically religious day, it would signal the church's desire to appeal to all people on behalf of peace.

Pope Benedict XVI's message for World Peace Day is expected to be released in early December.

The following is the full text of the Vatican statement released this morning, in an *NCR* translation from the Italian:

COMMUNICATION: THEME OF THE 43RD WORLD DAY OF PEACE(JANUARY 1, 2010)

The next message for the World Day of Peace, which will be celebrated on January 1, 2010, will be dedicated to the following theme: *If you want to cultivate peace, take care of creation*. The theme intends to solicit awareness of the close connection that exists in our globalized and interconnected world between safeguarding creation and cultivating the good of peace. That close and intimate connection, in fact, is increasingly placed in discussion by numerous problems regarding the natural environment of the human person, such as the use of resources, climate changes, the application and use of biotechnology, and demographic growth. If the human family does not know how to confront these challenges with a renewed sense of justice, social equity and international solidarity, it runs the risk of seeding violence among peoples and among present and future generations.

Following the precious indications contained in numbers 48-51 of the encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate*, the papal message will underline the urgency that *care of the environment must constitute a challenge for all humanity: it's a matter of a duty, common and universal, to respect a collective good*, destined for all, preventing use with impunity of the different categories of beings according to one's wishes. It's a responsibility that has to mature on the basis of the global character of the present ecological crisis and the consequent necessity to deal with it globally, given that all beings depend upon one another in the universal order established by the Creator.

In order to cultivate the good of peace, a renewed awareness must be favored of the interdependence that connects all the inhabitants of the earth. That awareness will serve to eliminate diverse causes of ecological disasters and will guarantee a timely capacity to respond when those disasters strike peoples and territories. The ecological question must not be approached only because of the frightening possibilities that environmental degradation presents: it must be translated, above all, into a strong motivation for cultivating peace.

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