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## Faith and AIDS work

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

Here is a companion piece to the CNS story we posted to our website yesterday: Catholic AIDS expert: Study lends credibility to faith leaders' work.

This comes from Ecumenical News International:

### **Faith leaders warned on statements about HIV and AIDS**

Vienna -- Faith leaders can play a key role in the fight against the HIV pandemic if their public statements help combat stigma and discrimination, a meeting of faith groups in Vienna in advance of the 18th International AIDS Conference has heard.

"Religious leaders have the trust and confidence of their communities and can help break these barriers and create a more supportive environment," the Netherlands AIDS ambassador Marijke Wijnroks told a 17 July multi-faith conference in the Austrian capital.

Wijnroks acknowledged that faith communities have been "on the frontline of the response to HIV and AIDS".

Still, religious leaders through their language have also contributed to the burden of the disease, she warned. "Public positions and statements of some faith-based organisations have at times been unhelpful, or even harmful," said Wijnroks. [592 words, ENI-10-0495]

Pope Benedict's statement of early last year that condoms aggravate the problem of AIDS, will no doubt jump immediately to mind for some readers. And yet, as John Allen reported at that time, Pope's condom message resonates with many

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