

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

January 25, 2011 at 10:50am

Pope: Evangelization, justice work linked

by Carol Glatz by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- It is "unacceptable" to evangelize without addressing the urgent problems of poverty, injustice and oppression, Pope Benedict XVI said.

To not be concerned with life's temporal problems would be to forget the Gospel teaching to love one's neighbor who is suffering and in need and "it would not be in harmony with Jesus' life," which combined proclaiming the Good News and curing people of disease and illness, the pope said in his message for World Mission Sunday 2011.

The annual observance will be marked Oct. 23 at the Vatican and in most countries.

In his message, released in Italian Jan. 25 at the Vatican, the pope focused on the responsibility of every baptized Christian to announce the Gospel message to all men and women in every corner of the world.

"We cannot remain untroubled by the fact that after 2,000 years, there are still people who don't know Christ and still have not heard his message of salvation," the pope said.

Just as important is the cultural transformation of traditionally Christian countries that have forgotten or abandoned the Christian faith and are now "resistant to opening themselves up" to the dimension of religion and belief, it said.

Globalization and relativism have fueled the spread of a mentality and a lifestyle that "exalts the search for well-being and easy money and having one's career and success be the goals of life, even at the expense of moral values," the papal message said.

Bringing the Gospel to everyone is "the most precious service the church can give to humanity and to every individual on a quest for profound reasons to live life to the full," it said.

But evangelization is "a complex process" that includes solidarity with those in need, the papal message said.

Catholics are called to support foreign missions and to promote the human person, it said.

Pope Paul VI underlined that it was "unacceptable that evangelization would ignore questions concerning human development, justice and liberation from every form of oppression, obviously with respect for autonomy in the political sphere," it said.

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