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Pope links British riots to moral relativism

by Francis X. Rocca by Religion News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI linked last month's riots in England to the corrosive effects of moral relativism, and warned that preserving social order requires government policies based on enduring values.

Benedict made his remarks on Friday to Britain's new Vatican ambassador, Nigel M. Baker, at a meeting in the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, outside Rome.

The moral basis of government policies is especially important in the light of events in England this summer, Benedict said, in an apparent reference to riots in London and other English cities last month, which left five people dead and caused at least 200 million pounds (\$320 million) in property damage.

When policies do not presume or promote objective values, the resulting moral relativism ... tends instead to produce frustration, despair, selfishness and a disregard for the life and liberty of others, the pope said.

Benedict called on government leaders to foster the essential values of a healthy society, through the defense of life and of the family, the sound moral education of the young, and a fraternal regard for the poor and the weak.

The pope's words echoed remarks by British Prime Minister David Cameron, who said last month that the riots were a consequence of his nation's slow-motion moral collapse.

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