

Pontiff Urges Tourists to Think Green

Says Youth Need to Learn to Shun Waste

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, SEPT. 29, 2008 (Zenit.org) - Tourists should protect the environment and the local cultures they visit, says Benedict XVI.

The Pope affirmed this Saturday, returning again to the theme of respect for God's creation, a staple of his pontificate. He was addressing representatives of two tourism organizations accompanied by Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. The address marked the United Nations' World Tourism Day.

The Holy Father said tourism that treats the environment and other people responsibly is "a reason for hope in a world in which the distance between those who have everything and those who suffer hunger, scarcity and drought is accentuated."

He said he hoped this year's theme for the World Day, "Tourism Responding to the Challenge of Climate Change," would "succeed in positively influencing the lifestyle of so many tourists, so that each one will contribute to the well-being of all, which in fact turns out to be that of each one."

The Pontiff also stressed the need to foster "social tourism," which "promotes the participation of the weakest classes and can be a valid instrument to combat poverty and frailty."

Frugal living

On global warming, Benedict XVI said humanity "has the duty to protect the treasure of Creation, and to be determined in opposing the indiscriminate use of the earth's goods."

He affirmed: "Experience teaches that the responsible management of creation is, or should be, a part of a healthy economy and sustainable tourism. On the contrary, the improper use of nature and the abuse inflicted on the culture of local peoples also harms tourism.

"To learn to respect the environment also teaches respect for others and for oneself."

The Pope called for forming an "ethics of responsibility" that considers the well-being of future generation. Part of such an ethics is a culture geared toward appropriate behaviors, he said, particularly "more sober lifestyles."

In this connection, Benedict XVI emphasized the role of young people when it comes to proposing "behavior directed to the appreciation of nature and its defense, in a correct ecological perspective, as I underlined several times on the occasion of World Youth Day in Sydney."

"It is up to new generations to promote a healthy and solidary tourism that prohibits consumerism and the waste of the earth's resources, to make room for gestures of solidarity and friendship, of knowledge and understanding," he stressed.

In another example of the Pope's concern for the planet, workers began today installing solar panels on Paul VI Hall, which will generate enough energy to heat or cool the 6,000-seat auditorium.