

PAPAL STATEMENT TO THE UN CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE
22 SEPTEMBER 2009

"The Earth Is Indeed a Precious Gift of the Creator"

The following statement was sent by Pope Benedict XVI to the 22 September UN summit on climate change:

I wish to reflect today upon the relationship between the Creator and ourselves as guardians of his creation. In so doing I also wish to offer my support to leaders of governments and international agencies who soon will meet at the United Nations to discuss the urgent issue of climate change.

The Earth is indeed a precious gift of the Creator who, in designing its intrinsic order, has given us guidelines that assist us as stewards of his creation. Precisely from within this framework, the Church considers that matters concerning the environment and its protection are intimately linked with integral human development. In my recent encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, I referred to such questions recalling the "pressing moral need for renewed solidarity" (no. 49) not only between countries but also between individuals, since the natural environment is given by God to everyone, and so our use of it entails a personal responsibility towards humanity as a whole, particularly towards the poor and towards future generations (cf. no. 48).

How important it is then, that the international community and individual governments send the right signals to their citizens and succeed in countering harmful ways of treating the environment! The economic and social costs of using up shared resources must be recognized with transparency and borne by those who incur them, and not by other peoples or future generations. The protection of the environment, and the safeguarding of resources and of the climate, oblige all leaders to act jointly, respecting the law and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the world (cf. no. 50). Together we can build an integral human development beneficial for all peoples, present and future, a development inspired by the values of charity in truth. For this to happen it is essential that the current model of global development be transformed through a greater, and shared, acceptance of responsibility for creation: this is demanded not only by environmental factors, but also by the scandal of hunger and human misery.

With these sentiments I wish to encourage all the participants in the United Nations summit to enter into their discussions constructively and with generous courage. Indeed, we are all called to exercise responsible stewardship of creation, to use resources in such a way that every individual and community can live with dignity, and to develop "that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God" (Message for the 2008 World Day of Peace, 7)!