



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN
THE "COURT OF THE GENTILES" MEETING IN PORTUGAL
[GUIMARÃES, 16-17 NOVEMBER 2012]**

Dear Friends, with deep gratitude and affection, I greet all of the participants in the “Court of the Gentiles”, which is being inaugurated in Portugal on 16 and 17 November 2012, bringing believers and nonbelievers together in the common wish to affirm the value of human life against the rising tide of the culture of death.

In reality, the awareness of the sacredness of life has been entrusted to us, not as something to be disposed of freely but as a gift to be faithfully guarded; it belongs to the moral heritage of humanity. “Even in the midst of difficulties and uncertainties, every person sincerely open to truth and goodness can, by the light of reason and the hidden action of grace, come to recognize in the natural law written in the heart (cf. Rom 2:14-15) the sacred value of human life from its very beginning until its end” (Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 2). We are not a random product of evolution, but each one of us is the fruit of God’s thought: we are loved by him.

Yet, if reason can grasp the value of life, why call on God? I answer with human experience. The death of a loved one is, for those who love him, the most absurd event imaginable: this person is unconditionally worthy of life, it is good and beautiful that he or she exist (being, the good, the beautiful, as a metaphysician would say, are transcendentally interchangeable). Similarly, the death of this person, in the eyes of those who do not love him or her, seems logical (not absurd). Who is right? The one who loves (for whom “the death of this person is absurd”) or the one who does not love (for whom “the death of this person is logical”)?

The first position is defensible only if every person is loved by an infinite Power; and this is the reason why it was necessary to call upon God. In fact, anyone who loves does not want their loved one to die; and, if he could, he would stop it forever. If he could... Finite love is powerless; infinite love all powerful. Now, this is the certainty that the Church proclaims: “For God so loved the world

that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Yes! God loves each person who, therefore, is unconditionally worthy of life. “The blood of Christ, while it reveals the grandeur of the Father’s love, shows how precious man is in God’s eyes and how valuable is his life” (*Evangelium Vitae*, n. 25).

In modern times, however, man has wanted to avoid the creative and redeeming gaze of the Father (cf. Jn 4:14), relying on himself and not on Divine Power. It is almost like a windowless building of cement, in which man controls the temperature and the light; and yet, even in a self-constructed world, we draw upon the “resources” of God, which we then transform into our own products. What can we say then? It is necessary to reopen the windows, to see again the vastness of the world, of heaven and earth, and to learn to use all things in a good way. In fact, the value of life becomes evident only if God exists. Therefore, it would be nice if nonbelievers were to live “as though God existed”. Even if they do not have the strength to believe, they should live on the basis of this hypothesis; otherwise, the world cannot not work. There are so many problems that must be resolved, but that cannot ever happen if God is not at the centre, if God does not become visible once again in the world and determining in our lives. Whoever opens himself to God does not alienate himself from the world and from mankind, but finds brothers: in God our walls of separation fall, we are all brothers and sisters, we are part of one another.

My friends, I would like to close with these words from the *Second Vatican Council* to men of thought and science: “Happy are they who, possessing the truth, search more earnestly for it in order to renew it, deepen it, and transmit it to others” (*Message*, 9 December 1965). This is the spirit and the *raison d’être* of the Court of the Gentiles. To you, committed in different ways to this meaningful initiative, I express my support and I send you my most heartfelt encouragement. May my affection and my blessing accompany you today and in the future.

From the Vatican, 13 November 2012

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