

Cardinal Turkson to celebrate Mass at Baltimore Basilica

Cardinal Peter Turkson, prefect of the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, will celebrate the 5:30 p.m. Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Baltimore June 16.

Cardinal Turkson, 69, is a former archbishop of Cape Coast, Ghana, and a former president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. In May, he co-released a new Vatican document approved by Pope Francis asserting that every economic activity has a moral and ethical dimension.

Father James Boric, rector of the Baltimore Basilica, said he welcomes Cardinal Turkson "with great joy."

"To have Cardinal Turkson come to the basilica is an honor and a privilege," Father Boric said. "His love for all life, especially the poor and forgotten, is inspirational."

A biblical scholar who has been active in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, Cardinal Turkson speaks fluent English, Fante, French, Italian, German and Hebrew. He has written knowledge of Latin and Greek.

In a [2005 interview](#) with the Catholic Review, Cardinal Turkson discussed Catholicism in Africa, acknowledging that the Catholic Church is experiencing rapid growth and large numbers of religious vocations on the continent. He expressed concerns, however, about the nature of the growth.

"It is true that the church in Africa is thriving," said Cardinal Turkson, who led the effort to establish Ghana's first Catholic university. "But we also have had a certain type of catechesis that is not too deep. Traditional cultures and values are not too radically transformed by the values of the Gospel. We need a more deeply rooted experience of conversion."

Cardinal Turkson pointed to the genocide and war that plagued Rwanda as an

example of how some Catholics in Africa have not fully embraced the Gospel message.

Rwanda “was supposed to be 80 percent Catholic, but they forgot they were Catholic, and they forgot they were Christian,” Cardinal Turkson told the Catholic Review. “There was terrible loss of life. Evangelization needs to be radical so that traditional values are challenged and transformed.”

In the 2005 interview, the cardinal said he was saddened to see the church struggling in Europe. European missionaries took the Catholic faith to Africa, and Catholics there look to Europeans as their spiritual parents, he said.

“It’s indispensable that we see Christianity come back to Europe,” Cardinal Turkson said. “If Europe should become less Christian, it gives us a sense of being orphans, of having an experience of faith without parents.”

He said it hurts evangelization efforts in Africa when people look at Europe and see that those who encouraged Africans to embrace the faith are now abandoning it.

In recent years, Cardinal Turkson has been outspoken on the need to protect the environment, connecting environmentalism to the pro-life movement.

In 2015, he told a U.N. gathering on climate change that Pope Francis’ encyclical on the care of creation called on all societies to examine how they produce and consume goods and on all the world’s people to realize the role they, too, have in addressing global warming.

The cardinal, sometimes mentioned as a possible successor to Pope Francis, aroused some controversy in 2011 when he called for a “world central bank” to regulate the global financial industry.

The same day he celebrates Mass in Baltimore, Cardinal Turkson will participate in a round-table discussion at Loyola University Maryland in Baltimore, touching on issues of economic justice. The event is sponsored by Conscious Venture Lab, the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Sellinger School of Business.

Catholic News Service contributed to this story.

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