

# Kissinger discusses dialogue, diplomacy, Mideast

VATICAN CITY - The international community needs farsighted individuals and institutions capable of promoting values that will increase dialogue, justice and peace, said former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

The almost 84-year-old professor said he agreed to come to the Vatican and address the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences because he was interested in a philosophical discussion of the nature of international relations.

However, meeting reporters April 28 in the Vatican Gardens, Mr. Kissinger also spoke about the importance of preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons, the importance of dialogue for peace in the Middle East, the complexity of the situation in Iraq and the need for a bipartisan U.S. foreign policy.

Today politicians in every country are under pressure to deal with immediate problems, "but the way you make history is to set your sights higher and look more into the distant future," he told reporters.

Mr. Kissinger said that while he would not agree with everything Pope Benedict XVI said in his September speech in Regensburg, Germany - the speech that caused controversy by referring to violence in Islam - the pope's central point was important.

"I understand the fundamental point to be this: The Holy Father supports a dialogue between religions, but he believes there needs to be ground rules for a dialogue," Mr. Kissinger said.

The essential ground rule is the use of "reason, which means you respect the other side even when you do not agree with it," he said.

"This is the basis on which peace can be made between religions and not on the basis that one religion says that it alone can determine what is right for everybody," he said.

Mr. Kissinger, who had a private meeting with Pope Benedict in September, said, "As a student of philosophy and of history, I have been very interested in the contribution to the continuity of our values by the Catholic Church," especially in a way that "emphasizes reason and dialogue and community."

Although he is not a Catholic, he said he shared the Vatican's conviction that in international relations "contributions can be made by values to the continuity and survival of our civilization."

Mr. Kissinger attended the academy's April 27-28 discussions on "Charity and Justice in the Relations Among Nations and Peoples." Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's U.N. nuncio, was present for Kissinger's talk to the academy.

Answering reporters' questions afterward, Mr. Kissinger said Iran's potential to develop nuclear weapons is among the most worrying events on the international stage.

"I believe that almost through an accident of history Iran has become the tipping point. If Iran succeeds in getting nuclear weapons, it will be impossible to avoid proliferation," making the world more and more dangerous, he said.

"I favor a diplomatic solution," he said. But the international community must be serious, he said.

"One should not use diplomacy as an excuse not to have a solution," said Mr. Kissinger.

He called for a political solution to the increasing crisis within Iraq and for negotiations between Israel and its neighbors to bring peace to the region.

As for the United States, he said, "in the present climate it is almost impossible to say anything that will not be controversial when you boil it down into a headline."

"I hope that after the elections, we will achieve a bipartisan foreign policy and, whoever wins, whatever time I have left, I will do my best to support that," he said.