

# On World AIDS Day, Vatican renews call for greater access to therapy

VATICAN CITY - The deaths each year of more than a million people from AIDS, the suffering of their families and the new infections of hundreds of thousands of infants are unacceptable when the medicines needed to prevent them exist, a Vatican official said.

Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, president of the Pontifical Council for Health Care Ministry, said World AIDS Day must be a time “to promote universal access to therapies for those who are infected, the prevention of transmission from mother to child, and education” in responsible sexuality.

In a statement Dec. 1, he said that despite the development of antiretroviral drugs 20 years ago, an estimated 1.8 million people still die of AIDS each year.

“These are people who could lead normal lives if they only had access to suitable pharmacological therapies,” he said.

The deaths “are no longer justifiable,” the archbishop said, nor is the pain experienced by their families and fact that hundreds of thousands of children are orphaned each year.

Universal access to antiretroviral therapy is essential, he said. But greater efforts also must be made in educating people, especially the young, in a responsible exercise of their sexuality, one that “privileges abstinence, conjugal faithfulness and the rejection of sexual promiscuity,” he said.