

Papal charity donates \$250,000 for Haitian school reconstruction

VATICAN CITY – A papal charity donated \$250,000 for the reconstruction of a school in Haiti and as a sign of Pope Benedict XVI's concern for the earthquake-devastated population.

Cardinal Paul Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, led the delegation to the Haitian capital, Port-Au-Prince, to present the check July 22, Vatican Radio reported.

The money will go toward the reconstruction of the St. Francis de Sales School, which was destroyed along with much of the city and 20 percent of the country in the Jan. 12 earthquake, Vatican Radio said.

The idea was not to offer only economic aid, the radio report said, "but above all a gesture of closeness by Pope Benedict to the victims of the earthquake, who are still suffering greatly."

Cor Unum is the Vatican agency that coordinates the charitable operations of the church and follows the suggestions of the pope. Its funds, used to help ease situations created by natural disasters, war, poverty and hunger, are built through donations from around the world.

Cardinal Cordes' group visited many camps for displaced Haitians run by the country's Catholic organizations, including Caritas Haiti. The delegation also met with representatives of the numerous humanitarian agencies at the papal nunciature in the capital, Vatican Radio said.

The radio also reported that the pope had made an additional donation to Caritas Haiti.

Cor Unum distributed \$1.87 million for emergency aid in 25 countries in 2009, Vatican Radio said. It also described additional papal foundations supporting different charitable projects.

In 2009 the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel donated \$2.3 million in aid to African countries affected by desertification, it said.

The Populorum Progressio Foundation spent more than \$2 million last year to fund projects in more than 20 countries in agriculture, infrastructure, education and small business and skills development. It is evaluating similar initiatives for this year, Vatican Radio reported.

Some \$2.3 million went for the support of women, children, the elderly and the disabled in “integral human development” programs in 45 countries, the radio said.

Through the “100 Projects for the Holy Father” program, wealthier countries are invited to help the church work in poor countries; the program accounts for about \$20 million for 200 projects, Vatican Radio said.