

# Pope condemns ‘plague’ of abortion in Romania, Moldova

VATICAN CITY – Even Catholic families in Romania and Moldova are falling victim “to the plagues of abortion, corruption, alcoholism and drug addiction, as well as birth control using methods contrary to the dignity of the human person,” Pope Benedict XVI said.

Meeting the bishops of Romania and Moldova Feb. 12 at the end of their “ad limina” visits to the Vatican, the pope said the bishops must help their people understand that the faith that gave them strength under communism must continue to guide their lives.

Pope Benedict suggested the bishops develop and train a network of parish-based educators who would prepare young couples for marriage, work with families and coordinate youth ministry.

“What is needed most of all is a decisive commitment to promoting the presence of Christian values in society, developing formation centers where the young can learn authentic values, enriched by the genius of your countries’ cultures, so they can give witness to them,” the pope said.

The transformation to market economies, the current economic crisis and the longstanding emigration of workers to Western Europe are undermining traditional values, he said.

Catholic minorities in Romania and Moldova should work with their countries’ Orthodox majorities to “defend the Christian roots of Europe and Christian values and give a joint witness on themes such as the family, bioethics, human rights, honesty in public life and ecology,” he said.

Archbishop Ioan Robu of Bucharest, president of the Romanian bishops’ conference, told the pope that “our seminaries are still full and there is much vitality and enthusiasm in them.” Vocations to religious life have slowed, but young people are still entering, he said.

At the same time, the church must face “a society in which the number of families marked by separation and divorce is high, a society in which materialism has led some to consider abortion to be a method of family planning, a society in which poverty has produced the phenomenon of the abandonment of children,” the archbishop said.

In response to these problems, he said, the church is strengthening its pastoral work among young people and families and has stepped up the social services it provides.