

# Pope says political field is for laypeople

VATICAN CITY - Involvement in politics is a role reserved to laypeople, but Catholic Church leaders must explain and promote the moral principles that will contribute to the common good, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"The church, while recognizing that it is not a political agent, cannot abstain from taking an interest in the good of the whole civil community in which it lives and works," the pope said in a message published Oct. 18.

The papal message marked the 100th annual celebration of a week dedicated to studying Catholic social teaching sponsored by the Italian bishops' conference.

Working for a just social order is a task that belongs to laypeople, the pope said.

"As citizens of the state it is up to them to participate personally in public life," and to dedicate themselves "with generosity and courage, enlightened by faith and the teaching of the church, and animated by the love of Christ," he said.

The role of church leaders is to provide guidance, he said, particularly when modern society is facing "multiple ethical and social emergencies that threaten its stability and seriously compromise its future."

Pope Benedict said the most pressing issues include "respect for human life and the attention that must be paid to the needs of the family founded on marriage between a man and a woman."

"As has been said many times, these are not only Catholic values and principles, but common values to be defended and protected, like those of justice, peace and the safeguarding of creation," the pope said.

The particular contribution of the church, he said, lies in educating the faithful, political and business leaders in "a genuine spirit of truth and honesty aimed at the search for the common good and not personal profit."