

# Pope tells police people need stronger values during tough times

VATICAN CITY - Pope Benedict XVI called on people to strengthen their commitment to the common good during difficult times and not be tempted to fear that law enforcement is incapable of protecting society.

Meeting with the Italian police who ensure his security when he is outside the Vatican, the pope said social and economic instability cause people to feel unsafe, but also leads to “a certain weakened perception of the ethical principles that underlie the law and personal moral behavior.”

Today’s world, even with all of its new hopes and possibilities, is still experiencing a sense “that moral consensus has failed and that, as a consequence, the structural foundations of coexistence are no longer able to fully function anymore,” he said Jan. 21.

“Therefore, many people are faced with the temptation of thinking that police and law enforcement charged with defending civil society are destined to failure,” the pope told the officers and their families.

He said Christians have a particular duty to avoid this temptation and “to find renewed resolve to profess one’s faith and carry out the good and to continue with courage to be close to others in their joy and suffering, and in times of happiness and darkness.”

It’s important to remember that the individual and his or her “intuitions and experiences” are not the source of truth and of what is right and wrong, he said.

In fact, religion and its moral values usually end up being gradually removed from any role in public life and relegated to the private sphere in a society that gives too much importance to “pluralism and tolerance” of subjective whims and interests, he said.

The real meaning of conscience is not subjectively inferring what is wrong and right,

he said, but refers to the human capacity “to recognize the truth, and even before that, the possibility to hear its call, to seek it and find it.”

People need to know how to be open to the truth and the good and to be able to freely and willingly accept those principles, he said.

The great challenges awaiting humanity “demand that God and mankind meet up again and that society and public institutions rediscover their ‘soul,’ their spiritual and moral roots,” so that they can solidify the ethical and juridical values that ground them and guide their policies, he said.