

# Pope tells priests to be generous giving sacraments to young people

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI said the church should be generous when it comes to administering the sacraments to young people, recognizing that Jesus would have done the same.

The pope made the remarks in a closed-door meeting Aug. 6 with about 400 priests and religious in the northern Italian city of Bressanone, where the 81-year-old pontiff was vacationing.

Although reporters were not allowed inside the city's cathedral for the one-hour encounter, the Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, described some of the give and take in an interview with Vatican Radio.

One of six questions posed by priests touched on the pastoral care of children, Father Lombardi said. In his response, the pope spoke about the need to take a broad approach to the administration of sacraments, reflecting the merciful attitude shown by Christ.

"The pope said, 'I used to be more strict about this, but the example of Christ led me to become more welcoming in cases in which, perhaps, there is not a mature and solid faith, but there is a glimmer, a desire of communion with the church,'" the spokesman said.

The pope concluded that in such cases one can be "broader and more generous in the administration of the sacraments," Father Lombardi said.

The spokesman said the pope answered questions with a combination of clarity and humility, underlining at times that what he was imparting was his own best advice, not an infallible response.

Asked about environmental issues, the pope said that in recent times the church has made a greater effort to connect its teachings on redemption with the need to safeguard the gifts of creation.

He said the real threat facing the planet and the human being today is a materialistic vision that denies God and denies the need to use creation responsibly.