

# Pope urges international leaders to tackle poverty with courage

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy – Pope Benedict XVI urged international leaders to tackle global poverty “with courage” when they meet at the United Nations to verify implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Despite the current global financial crisis, the poor must not be forgotten, he told pilgrims Sept. 21 at his residence in Castel Gandolfo outside Rome.

He also sent greetings to Caribbean nations and coastal states in the U.S. battered by recent hurricanes.

The pope spoke four days before world leaders joined the U.N. General Assembly to check progress on the anti-poverty program adopted eight years ago.

“On the occasion of this important meeting ... I want to renew my invitation to adopt and implement with courage the measures needed to eradicate extreme poverty, hunger, ignorance and the scourge of pandemics, which strike above all the most vulnerable,” he said.

The Millennium Development Goals were adopted by almost 200 U.N. member nations in 2000 and seek to slash global poverty in half by 2015 by increasing richer countries’ spending on development aid for poorer nations.

The pope said he recognized that honoring the millennium goals’ commitments will require “sacrifice at this difficult economic moment in the world.” But he said they would bring structural relief to poorer countries and thus favor the peace and well-being of the entire planet.

In a separate appeal, the pope asked for aid to hurricane-battered areas of the southern United States and Caribbean countries and said he was keeping the affected populations in his prayers.

The pope made his remarks at a noon blessing.

“Over the last weeks, several Caribbean countries, in particular Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, and the southern United States, especially Texas, have been stricken hard by violent hurricanes,” he said.

“I want to assure all these dear populations my special remembrance in prayer. I also express the hope that relief assistance quickly reaches the most damaged areas,” he said.

The pope said this was a situation in which “solidarity and brotherhood should prevail over every other aspect.”