

Pope urges world leaders to stabilize markets without excluding poor

VATICAN CITY - In a letter to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, Pope Benedict XVI urged leaders from the world's wealthiest nations to stabilize financial markets without excluding families and the poor.

In the March 30 letter, Pope Benedict emphasized that participants in the Group of 20 leaders' summit in London April 2-3 must find a way out of the global economic crisis but must avoid selfish or protectionist solutions.

The pope said the solutions must seek "to offer security to families and stability to workers and, through appropriate regulations and controls, to restore ethics to the financial world."

"If a key element of the crisis is a deficit of ethics in economic structures, the same crisis teaches us that ethics is not external to the economy, but internal, and that the economy cannot function if it does not bear within it an ethical component," said the pope.

Referring to his March trip to Cameroon and Angola, Pope Benedict also encouraged summit participants not to exclude Africa or cut development aid to developing countries.

Development aid - including debt cancellation - "has not been the cause of the crisis and, out of fundamental justice, must not be its victim," he said.

In a March 31 letter responding to the pope, Prime Minister Brown said protecting the poorest is one of his top priorities.

"It is vital that rich countries keep their promises on aid even in these tough times," he said.

“This is a decisive moment for the world economy. ... We can either let the recession run its course or we can resolve as a world community to unite, to stand with millions of people struggling in these tough times, to fight back against this global recession that is hurting so many people in every continent,” he said. “I hope that the world’s leaders can come together to rise to this challenge.”

Prime Minister Brown met with Pope Benedict at the Vatican Feb. 19 and said their meeting focused heavily on global economic troubles.

The G-20 is an informal forum that promotes discussion among industrial and emerging-market countries on key issues related to global economic stability. It includes representatives of 19 countries and the European Union; representatives of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund are ex-officio members.