

# **Pope: Welcome repentant women who had an abortion**

VATICAN CITY – Abortion can never be justified, but women who repent after having an abortion should be welcomed back into the Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI told the bishops of Kenya.

Meeting the bishops Nov. 19 at the end of their “ad limina” visits to report on the status of their dioceses, the pope decried “campaigns by agencies promoting abortion” to change Kenyan law, which allows abortion only when the life of the mother is in danger.

“This direct destruction of an innocent human life can never be justified, however difficult the circumstances that may lead some to consider taking such a grave step,” the pope said.

He told the bishops that they must remind their people that the right to life is absolute and applies to each human being without exception.

“The Catholic community must offer support to those women who may find it difficult to accept a child, above all when they are isolated from their family and friends,” the pope told the bishops.

“The community should be open to welcome back all who repent of having participated in the grave sin of abortion and should guide them with pastoral charity to accept the grace of forgiveness, the need for penance and the joy of entering once more into the new life of Christ,” he said.

The pope said Kenya, like Africa in general, has drawn strength from the importance and value traditionally given to family life.

“This precious treasure must be guarded at all costs,” he said. “All too often, the ills besetting some parts of African society – such as promiscuity, polygamy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases – can be directly related to disordered notions of marriage and family life.”

The Catholic Church must help parents teach their children “how to live out a Christian vision of marriage, conceived as an indissoluble union between one man and one woman, essentially equal in their humanity and open to the generation of new life,” he said.