

Terrorism based on real grievances

ROME - Heightened security and military preparedness alone cannot prevent acts of terrorism, because terrorism is born of real grievances twisted by hatred, said Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers.

Cardinal Martino spoke at the opening of an April 23-27 seminar the council was holding with Catholic airport chaplains to discuss ways to promote dialogue and respond to terrorist threats and fears of terrorism among airport workers and passengers.

While there is no excuse for terrorism, the cardinal said, the threat cannot be eliminated until the causes are.

"Legal measures and being armed are not enough to fight it," he said. "It is necessary to respond also with cultural instruments capable of offering nonviolent alternatives to redress genuine grievances."

Religious leaders have a particular responsibility to publicly condemn terrorist acts committed in the name of religion, he said.

They must be clear and vocal "in proclaiming that spreading hate and violence is antithetical to authentic religion, thus denying terrorists any form of religious or moral legitimacy," Cardinal Martino said.

Archbishop Angelo Amato, secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, gave the keynote address at the seminar, offering the chaplains an overview of philosophical and theological considerations of the existence of evil.

While international terrorism is an obvious example of evil, he said, evil, like goodness, is around and within each person.

"In the face of this phenomenon, man always has exercised his reason in order to understand the meaning and origin of evil and to find solutions aimed at limiting its devastating effects on individuals and communities," he said.

In the Christian viewpoint, the archbishop said, “evil depends on human freedom, human responsibility and human awareness of transgressing divine law.”

“Sin, therefore, is the first cause of evil,” he said.

But, at the same time, people cannot deny that natural disasters and illness also are forms of evil, and there usually is no human responsibility behind them, the archbishop said.

“The teaching of the church on the presence of evil requires from us faith in God, lord of the world and of history, accompanied by a conviction that the ways of his providence often remain unknown to us,” Archbishop Amato told the chaplains.

“In faith, in communion with the one true Lord of the world, we have been given the ‘armor of God,’ with which we, together with the entire body of Christ, can oppose these powers” of evil, he said.

Battling evil requires defending truth, acting righteously, forming consciences and promoting respect, he said.

But it also requires help from God, which is why the Lord’s Prayer includes the line, “Deliver us from evil,” the archbishop said.