

Vatican newspaper criticizes BBC change to 'common era' dating

VATICAN CITY - The Vatican newspaper said it was "historically senseless hypocrisy" for the BBC to drop the dating abbreviations B.C. and A.D. on the grounds that they might offend non-Christians.

In a front-page commentary Oct. 4, L'Osservatore Romano said the change reflected a wider effort to "cancel every trace of Christianity from Western culture."

The British media corporation recently announced it would replace B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini, or Year of the Lord) with B.C.E. (Before Common Era) and C.E. (Common Era.) It said the new terms were a "religiously neutral" alternative.

The Vatican newspaper added its voice to a growing number of critics, who have noted that the new dating abbreviations still use the birth of Christ as a reference point, but without acknowledging the connection.

"To deny the historically revolutionary importance of the coming of Christ on earth, which is also accepted by those who do not recognize him as the son of God, is an act of enormous foolishness," the newspaper said.

"Why not recognize that from that moment, the world changed?" it said. For one thing, it said, the modern concept of human rights owes much to the new Christian vision of the equality of human beings as children of God.

The newspaper said it was "anti-historical" to deny the cultural debt owed by civilization to Christianity.