

# **Work must not just be about productivity, but charity**

VATICAN CITY – The working world must not just be about competition and productivity; today's workers must also make room for charity and defending human dignity, said Pope Benedict XVI.

"Today more than ever it's urgent and necessary" to live as Christians in the workplace and to become "apostles among workers," the pope said.

"Becoming more competitive and productive is not the only thing that matters," he said in a message to young people. "Paying charitable witness" in the workplace and elsewhere is necessary, he said.

The pope's message was read to participants gathered for the ninth International Youth Forum March 28-31 in the town of Rocca di Papa, south of Rome. About 300 young people from more than 80 countries gathered to discuss the theme "Christ's Witness in the World of Work."

The pope said if work is to become a Christian vocation and "a true mission," young people also need support found in parishes or lay communities.

Recent changes to the global economy and labor markets not only have created new opportunities for today's workers, but new dangers also have appeared, the pope said.

He said some workers find themselves in worrying conditions such as exploitation and alienation.

But the pope also highlighted more common hardships experienced by young workers today: the difficulty of finding work related to one's studies or training, the need to travel far from home to find work and growing job insecurity.

These latter two situations often have serious repercussions, he said, leading many young people to doubt they will ever be able to plan for the future, get married and

build a family.

These “complex and delicate problems must be tackled” where and when possible, using church social doctrine as a guide, Pope Benedict said.

The Christian “gospel of work” promotes the growth of the individual and the community in a way that taps into a person’s talents and uses them for the common good “in a spirit of justice and solidarity,” he said.

Workers must not forget to stay united with Christ through prayer and the sacraments, he said, adding that workers must remember Sunday is a day to put work aside and dedicate to the Lord.

Archbishop Stanislaw Rylko, president of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, which sponsored the forum, said young people need to resist giving up and the feeling of desperation in the face of unemployment and job insecurity.

Young people must “overcome passivity and resignation in order to courageously take control of their own future” by taking the initiative and being creative in exploring and improving their professional skills, he said in a March 27 interview with Vatican Radio.

Luigi Marchitelli, the forum’s press officer, told Catholic News Service April 2 that almost all of the delegates found that no matter how bad the job situation was for men “it was worse for women.”

He said speakers pointed to examples in which women were discriminated against for having children or being pregnant. Women in Africa and especially Sudan would choose an abortion rather than risk losing their job, he said.

Delegates from bishops’ conferences and lay movements and associations all underlined the need to evangelize the workplace by living a Christian life, said Marchitelli.

Successful evangelization would come “not by watering down one’s faith and not by trying to convert, but by showing our joy, our hopes, our desire to do things well” by adhering to Christian values, he said.