

News

Pope exhorts laity: fight 'insidious' threats to human life, marriage

May 14, 2010

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Attacks on the dignity of human life and on marriage are "some of today's most insidious and dangerous threats to the common good," Pope Benedict XVI said during a Mass at Fatima on May 13.

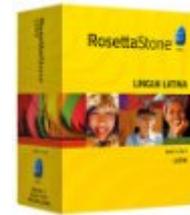
Preaching to a congregation of well over 100,000 at the Marian shrine, the Holy Father emphasized the need for Christian involvement in public life to build up a civilization of love. This activism, he said, "is the proper realm of the lay faithful, who are called to promote justice and the common good."

To be effective in bringing the Gospel to the world, the Pope said, Christians need proper spiritual formation. Without a strong foundation in faith, he said, the laity can be prone to the influence of the dominant secular culture: "The pressure exerted by the prevailing culture, which constantly promotes a lifestyle based on the law of the strongest, on easy and attractive gain, ends up influencing our ways of thinking, our projects and the goals of our service, and risks emptying them of the motivation of faith and Christian hope which had originally inspired them."

The Pontiff offered his praise for initiatives that defend human life and "promote the reconciliation and healing of those harmed by the tragedy of abortion." He gave his endorsement to all "initiatives aimed at protecting the essential and primary values of life, beginning at conception, and of the family based on the indissoluble marriage between a man and a woman." While he spoke in general terms about the defense of marriage, the Pope's words were obviously directed toward efforts to bring legal recognition of same-sex marriage in Portugal.

Later in the evening the Pope met with the bishops of Portugal, and told them that "the times in which we live demand a new missionary vigor." The intellectual elites of the modern world, he said, "contain many believers who are ashamed of their beliefs and who even give a helping hand to this type of secularism, which raises barriers before Christian inspiration." Church leaders must combat that tendency, he said.

Nevertheless, the Pope continued, the proclamation of the Gospel is not merely an intellectual exercise; even an accurate recitation of Christian doctrine "does not penetrate to the depths of people's hearts." What attracts people to the Church, he said, is "the encounter with believing persons who, through their faith, draw others to the grace of Christ by bearing witness to Him."



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In that regard, the Pope encouraged the Portuguese bishops to encourage the "new movements" in the Church, while guiding them to "help the movements to find the right way, correcting them."

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- [Pope in Fatima: Build a Civilisation of Love \(Vatican Radio\)](#)
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