

Holy Father Denounces Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation and Organ Harvesting

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Vatican City, 23 April 2012 (VIS) -- The Holy Father has written a message for the seventh world congress on the pastoral care of tourism, which begins today in the Mexican city of Cancun. The message is addressed to Cardinal Antonio Maria Veglio, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, and to Bishop Pedro Pablo Elizondo Cardenas L.C., prelate of Cancun-Chetumanl.

"Tourism," the Pope writes in the English-language version of his message, "like other human realities, is called to be enlightened and transformed by the Word of God. Tourism, together with vacations and free time, is a privileged occasion for physical and spiritual renewal; it facilitates the coming together of people from different cultural backgrounds and offers the opportunity of drawing close to nature and hence opening the way to listening and contemplation, tolerance and peace, dialogue and harmony in the midst of diversity.

"Travelling reflects our being as 'homo viator;' at the same time it evokes that other deeper and more meaningful journey that we are called to follow and which leads to our encounter with God. Travelling, which offers us the possibility of admiring the beauty of peoples, cultures and nature, can lead to God and be the occasion of an experience of faith, "for from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator."

"On the other hand tourism, like every human reality, is not exempt from dangers or negative dimensions. We refer to evils that must be dealt with urgently since they trample upon the rights of millions of men and women, especially among the poor, minors and handicapped. Sexual tourism is one of the most abject of these deviations that devastate morally, psychologically and physically the life of so many persons and families, and sometimes whole communities. The trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation or organ harvesting as well as the exploitation of minors, abandoned into the hands of individuals without scruples and undergoing abuse and torture, sadly happen often in the context of tourism. This should bring all who are engaged for pastoral reasons or who work in the field of tourism, and the whole international community, to increase their vigilance and to foresee and oppose such aberrations."