

Pope's Address at Vaccine Project Launch
"Every Service Rendered to the Poor Is a Service Rendered to Peace"

VATICAN CITY, FEB. 9, 2007

Here is the address Benedict XVI gave today when he received in audience today representatives of the Advance Market Commitment project, formed to provide to the world's poor vaccines that will help to prevent pneumonia and meningitis.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you, the finance ministers of Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada and Russia, as well as other ministers, distinguished international leaders and important international figures, including the Queen of Jordan and the President of the World Bank. I thank Minister Tommaso Padoa Schioppa for his courteous words of greeting offered on your behalf. Our meeting today is a most welcome one, since it takes place as part of the launching of a pilot program aimed at developing and producing vaccines against pandemic diseases, and making them available to poorer countries. This worthy initiative, entitled Advance Market Commitment, is meant to help resolve one of the most pressing challenges in preventative healthcare, one which particularly affects nations already suffering from poverty and serious needs. It has the further merit of bringing together public institutions and the private sector in an effort to find the most effective means of intervening in this area.

Our gathering takes place just before the World Day of the Sick, held annually on 11 February, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes. It is an occasion for the Church to call public attention to the plight of the suffering, and this year it focuses on those with incurable diseases, many of whom are in the terminal stage. In this context, I wholeheartedly encourage your efforts for this new program and its goal of advancing scientific research directed to the discovery of new vaccines. Such vaccines are urgently needed to prevent millions of human beings, including countless children, from dying each year of infectious diseases, especially in those areas of our world at greatest risk. In this era of globalized markets, we are all concerned about the growing gap between the standard of living in countries enjoying great wealth and a high level of technological development, and that of underdeveloped countries where poverty persists and is even increasing.

The creative and promising initiative launched today seeks to counter this trend, since it aims to create "future" markets for vaccines, primarily those capable of preventing infant mortality. I assure you of the Holy See's full support of this humanitarian project, which is inspired by that spirit of human solidarity which our world needs in order to overcome every form of selfishness and to foster the peaceful coexistence of peoples. As I said in my Message for this year's World Day of Peace, every service rendered to the poor is a service rendered to peace, for "at the origin of many tensions that threaten peace are surely the many unjust inequalities still tragically present in our world" (No. 6).

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I will pray for each of you that Almighty God will assist your endeavors to accomplish this important work. Upon you and your loved ones, I cordially invoke his blessings of wisdom, strength and peace.

[Original text: English]

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