Globalization Could Slip Into Colonialism, Pope Warns
"It Will Be What People Make of It," He Contends

VATICAN CITY, APR. 27, 2001 (Zenit.org)- Globalization could become "a new version of colonialism" if it doesn't have a common code of ethics guiding it, John Paul II warns.

His comment came today when he met with 33 members of the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences, which is holding its plenary assembly in the Vatican. The assembly focused on the ethics of globalization.

In his address to the members and experts of the academy, the Holy Father said that "since the collapse of the collectivist system in Central and Eastern Europe, with its subsequent important effects on the Third World, humanity has entered a new phase in which the market economy seems to have conquered virtually the entire world."

Indeed, the Pope added, globalization's "prime characteristic is the increasing elimination of barriers to the movement of people, capital and goods. It enshrines a kind of triumph of the market and its logic," and "many people, especially the disadvantaged, experience this as something that has been forced upon them."

He noted, however, that "globalization, a priori, is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it. No system is an end in itself, and it is necessary to insist that globalization, like any other system, must be at the service of the human person; it must serve solidarity and the common good."

The Bishop of Rome referred to the concerns awakened by globalization, among which he highlighted "the use made of discoveries in the biomedical field," which "tend to catch legislators unprepared."

"Here we face a Promethean increase of power over human nature, to the point that the human genetic code itself is measured in terms of costs and benefits."

However, the Pontiff underlined, the "new practices [must] respect fundamental human values and the common good."

The Holy Father said that "not all forms of ethics are worthy of the name. We are seeing the emergence of patterns of ethical thinking that are byproducts of globalization itself and which bear the stamp of utilitarianism. Ethics cannot be the justification or legitimation of a system, but rather the safeguard of all that is human in any system. Ethics demands that systems be attuned to the needs of man, and not that man be sacrificed for the sake of the system."

"The Church on her part continues to affirm that ethical discernment in the context of globalization must be based upon two inseparable principles," John Paul II emphasized.
"First, the inalienable value of the human person," he said. "The human being must always be an end and not a means, a subject and not an object, not a commodity of trade.

"Second, the value of human cultures. ... Globalization must not be a new version of colonialism. It must respect the diversity of cultures which, within the universal harmony of peoples, are life's interpretative keys."

"As humanity embarks upon the process of globalization, it can no longer do without a common code of ethics," the Pope concluded. "In all the variety of cultural forms, universal human values exist and they must be brought out and emphasized as the guiding force of all development and progress."