

Pope decries growing 'aversion' to Christianity, urges Christians to unite on ethical issues

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ROME — Pope Benedict is condemning what he called "growing aversion" to the Christian faith in the world.

Benedict urged Christians to invigorate efforts to spread their faith's message despite what he described as the unfriendly climate to Christianity in parts of the world. He did not specify any particular region.

"In a world marked by religious indifference and even by a growing aversion toward the Christian faith, a new, intense activity of evangelization is necessary," the Pope said.

He urged Christians to overcome their differences through dialogue so that they can unite their efforts to influence debates in society on ethical issues like abortion, euthanasia and the limits of science and technology.

Benedict was leading a Vespers service in the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls to mark the end of a week that the Vatican each year dedicates to prayers for Christian unity.

The pontiff has made better relations among Christians an important aim of his papacy.

Despite that goal, relations with Anglicans were strained last year when Benedict made it easier for the conversion to Roman Catholicism by traditionalist Anglicans who are disillusioned by their own church's embrace of gay priests, blessing of same-sex marriages and women clergy.

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