

Pope Benedict XVI Begins Second Trip to Africa

VATICAN CITY (RNS) Pope Benedict XVI opened his second papal trip to Africa on Friday (Nov. 18) with a warning against economic development through unbridled capitalism.

Arriving in the West African country of Benin, Benedict told the country's president and other dignitaries that the process of modernizing traditional societies entails certain "pitfalls," including "unconditional surrender to the law of the market or that of finance."

The pope also warned his hosts of the dangers of nationalism, "politicization of interreligious tensions," and the "erosion of human, cultural, ethical and religious values."

During his three-day visit to Benin, Benedict will present Catholic bishops from across Africa with an authoritative papal document about the church's efforts to promote "reconciliation, justice and peace."

The document is based on a three-week synod of African bishops held at the Vatican in October 2009. That meeting ended with an unusually strong official statement that blamed violent conflict in Africa on "greed for power and wealth at the expense of the people and nation," and called on political leaders to "clean the continent of corruption."

Benedict will also speak to Benin's political, religious, business and cultural leaders at the presidential palace in the city of Cotonou, where he is likely to address the topics of economic justice, peace-building and interfaith dialogue.