

## Agencies' united call for action on climate

CARITAS Internationalis has joined other humanitarian organisations in calling for world leaders to take bold action on global warming, which will have a disastrous effect on the world's poor and hungry.

Climate change is already undermining efforts to help the more than one billion people now suffering from lack of food, and without drastic measures to limit its effects, "the risk of hunger and malnutrition could increase by an unprecedented scale within the next decades," according to Caritas Internationalis.

Caritas, the umbrella organisation for 164 Catholic charities including CAFOD, SCIAF and Trocaire, said it has signed a joint statement addressed to environmental ministers and other officials who will participate in the UN Summit for Climate Change which runs in

Copenhagen from December 7-18. The message includes both dire warnings and practical suggestions for action.

The UN World Food Programme and UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Health Organisation, the International Federation of the Red Cross, Oxfam, World Vision and Save the Children are the other co-signatories of the statement.

In their message, the organisations stressed that it is the world's most vulnerable people, especially children, who will suffer the most from the effects of catastrophic climate change.

"Climate change will act as a multiplier of existing threats to food security," the statement read. "It will make natural disasters more frequent and intense, land and water more scarce, and increases in food productivity even harder to achieve."

## Theology debates are good news for the faith

THE Catholic Church needs healthy debates between theologians to increase the understanding of faith, but the debate must always uphold official Church teaching and must be conducted in a way that does not confuse the faithful, Pope Benedict XVI has said.

In particular, the 12th-century theological debates between St Bernard of Clairvaux and Abelard, a French theologian, demonstrate "the usefulness and necessity of a healthy theological discussion in the Church, especially when the questions debated have not been defined by the magisterium, which must always remain an essential point of reference," the Pope said.

During his weekly general audience on November 4, Pope Benedict spoke about

what modern Catholics could learn from the debates between St Bernard, who followed the monastic theological tradition emphasising faith and prayer, and Abelard, who followed the scholastic tradition emphasising the use of reason.

Abelard's theological career was marked several times by Church condemnations of some of his positions, particularly regarding what he taught about the Trinity.

Pope Benedict said the censures of Abelard's work were a reminder that theologians must be careful to give precedence to the principles of faith that come from revelation and not to interpretations suggested by philosophy.

When a theologian strays into error, the Vatican must intervene in service of the truth, said the Pope.



To a better life: A migrant from Guatemala walks along the railway tracks toward a freight train in Guadalajara, Mexico. Thousands of migrants stop in Guadalajara to switch trains during their northward journey to the United States.

## Cartels target migrants in wave of kidnappings

By David Agren

**MEXICO'S drug-trafficking cartels now depend heavily on earnings obtained by kidnapping undocumented migrants and demanding ransoms from their relatives, according to a prominent Mexican politician.**

"The extortion of migrants, after drug trafficking, is the largest source of income for these groups," Senator Felipe Gonzalez Gonzalez, president of the Senate's Public Security Committee, told a forum on the kidnapping of migrants in Mexico.

Those sentiments were echoed by Catholic officials who work with migrants. They are working with a growing number of kidnapping victims who have been tortured, traumatised and sexually assaulted by gangs with close links to the drug cartels.

"The mafias are getting rich off migrants," said Fr Jose Alejandro Solalinde, the director of the Mexican bishops' migrant ministry in southwestern Mexico.

His comments highlight the most recent

hardships for the undocumented migrants who pass through the country on their way to the United States.

The migrants lack many basic legal protections in Mexico and have been preyed upon by gangs and unscrupulous public officials. But now they are viewed as a lucrative source of earnings by the drug cartels, which have increasingly diversified into other illegal activities to offset losses incurred after the ongoing crackdown on organised crime.

The kidnappings are a low risk, said Gerardo Laveaga Rendon, director of the National Institute of Criminal Sciences, because victimised migrants tend to stay silent after their ordeals in order to avoid unsympathetic immigration authorities.

He estimated the cartels collected almost £15m per month in ransoms.

"A person that's never going to denounce a crime, that's never going to cause a problem, is an invaluable piece of merchandise for organised crime," Mr Laveaga said.

The recent conferences were convened in response to a July report from the National Human Rights Commission that 9,758

undocumented migrants were kidnapped between September 2008 and February 2009.

Two-thirds of the kidnapping victims were from Honduras, with ransoms demanded as high as £3,000.

Catholic-run migrant shelters and groups which help migrants move through Mexico on their northward journeys provided much of the information for the report.

They believe the report's numbers are conservative and increasing – especially in the Gulf coast states of Tabasco and Veracruz, which are served by trains on which migrants frequently steal rides after entering the country from Guatemala.

The representatives report that migrants are frequently captured as they disembark trains and wait at bus stations. Others are deceived by human smugglers known as 'polleros.'

The kidnappings have become even more sophisticated as taxi drivers now work as scouts for the kidnappers, while local police departments provide security and municipal governments turn a blind eye.

The Church has called on the army and police to act against the kidnap gangs.

## Papal beatification plans progressing, cardinal tells audience at book launch

POPE John Paul II lives on "because he has remained in people's hearts," according to Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops.

"The light of his teaching and example was not extinguished with his death," the cardinal said during a conference to present a new book on the late Pope's legacy.

Mgr Slawomir Oder, postulator of Pope John Paul's sainthood cause, also spoke at the conference on November 4 at the parish of Rome's Polish community.

Asked about a date for the beatification of the Pope, who died in 2005, Mgr Oder said the Congregation for Saints' Causes was studying the case and he could not guess when it would finish.

"I can tell you that we are follow-

ing all of the procedures foreseen for these cases. Everything is moving at a natural rhythm.

"I understand many people want this to happen sooner, but as Pope Benedict told us: 'Do it quickly, but do it well.' And this is what we are doing," he said.

Rome's mayor, Gianni Alemanno, told reporters in late October that he expected the beatification would take place in Rome in 2010, and he said the city government would work with the Vatican to facilitate the visit of a massive group of people expected to come for the ceremony.

Asked if Mr Alemanno knew something concrete, Mgr Oder said: "I think he was expressing the desire we all have in our hearts."

"It's difficult to make any prediction at this point, but one can always

express a desire. Obviously the desire is that the beatification would take place soon. If this desire is accompanied by prayer, perhaps it will be fulfilled," Mgr Oder said.

The conference marked the launch of a new book about Pope John Paul's lasting impact on the Church and the world.

Written by Gian Franco Svidercoschi, the book is titled *Un Papa che non Muore: L'Eredita di Giovanni Paolo II* (which translates as *A Pope who Does Not Die: The Legacy of John Paul II*) and is available in Italian and in Polish.

Cardinal Re, who served Pope John Paul in the Vatican Secretariat of State and then at the Congregation for Bishops, called the late Pope "a great man, a great pope and a great saint".

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