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## **Pope creates new office to fight 'eclipse of God' in the West**

Archbishop Salvatore "Rino" Fisichella explains the details of the new council at a press conference

Vatican City, Oct 12, 2010 / 10:08 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- The new Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization was unveiled at a press conference at the Vatican Oct. 12.



Pope Benedict XVI has created the new Vatican office to address the growing problem of secularization and the "eclipse of God" in the nations of Europe and the West.

Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the new office, presented a letter from Pope Benedict outlining its mandate.

According to the Pope, the Church faces a new challenge today in its mission of evangelization. That is the "phenomenon of the detachment from the faith, that has progressively manifested itself in societies and cultures that for centuries appeared to be impregnated by the Gospel."

In his letter, the Pope described a religious landscape in the once-Christian West that is now characterized by a kind of practical atheism, where "economic well-being and consumerism ... inspire and sustain a life lived 'as if God did not exist.'" In addition to widespread attitudes of indifference to religion, he also noted that in some places deliberate efforts are being made at "uprooting" the historic Christian faith.

In countries where ancient Christian traditions are threatened with eclipse, the Pope said, "only a new evangelization can ensure the growth of a clear and profound faith, capable of making of these traditions a force of true freedom."

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To aid this new evangelization, the new pontifical office, known as a dicastery, will work with local bishops to promote missionary initiatives. The Pope stressed the need to find creative new ways to use communications media and to promote the Catechism of the Catholic Church as the "essential and complete formulation of the content of the faith for the men of our time."

Opposing the secularization and "de-Christianization" of the West has long been a deep concern of the Pope.

In a letter he sent to the world's bishops in March 2009, Pope Benedict wrote that "the supreme and fundamental priority of the Church and of the Successor of Peter at the present time" is "to lead men and women to God."

"In our days," the Pope explained, "when in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel, the overriding priority is to make God present in this world and to show men and women the way to God." In first announcing his plans for the new pontifical council at a vespers service, June 28, the Pope said that in the West, "Churches with an ancient foundation ... are experiencing the progressive secularization of society and a sort of 'eclipse of the sense of God,' which pose a challenge to finding appropriate to propose anew the perennial truth of Christ's Gospel."

In selecting Archbishop Fisichella to head the new office, the Pope has chosen a moral theologian with a longstanding concern for the Church's engagement with the modern world. Archbishop Fisichella is said to have collaborated with the then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in the drafting of "Fides et Ratio" ("Faith and Reason"), Pope John Paul II's 1998 encyclical letter on philosophy. Most recently, he served as head of the Pontifical Academy of Life.

Benedict established the office by a document known as a *moto proprio* (Latin for "of his own accord"). His apostolic letter establishing the office is entitled "Ubicumque et Semper (Everywhere and Always)."

"The Church has the duty to announce always and everywhere the Gospel of Jesus Christ," the letter begins. The "evangelizing mission," he adds is a continuation of Jesus' will and "is necessary and insubstitutable for the Church, an expression of its very nature."

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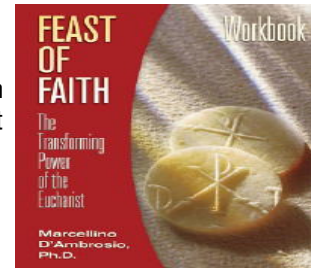
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