

Anger as Pope Benedict XVI says condoms make Aids worse

Pope Benedict XVI provoked a furious response from Aids campaigners on the first day of his visit to Africa when he declared that distributing condoms only 'aggravates' the problems inflicted by the condition.

By Nick Pisa in Rome

Last Updated: 12:43PM GMT 18 Mar 2009



Pope Benedict XVI gestures from the airplane before leaving from Rome's Leonardo da Vinci airport for a trip to Africa that includes stops in Cameroon and Angola Photo: AP

Speaking as he flew from Rome to Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, the Pope insisted that the way to confront the condition was through sexual monogamy.

Aids, he said, "is a tragedy that cannot be overcome by money alone, and that cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which even aggravates the problems"

It is believed to be the first time that the Pope, who will also visit Angola during his week-long trip, has uttered the word "condom" publicly.

Although he was only restating Church doctrine, Aids is rife in both countries he is visiting. Homosexual activists responded angrily, accusing the 81-year-old Pope of being out of touch.

Aurelio Mancuso of the Italian group Archigay said: "While across the world and especially in Africa thousands are dying of Aids, Ratzinger [Benedict] can think of nothing better to say than repeat the Vatican's position on condoms.

"We are now beyond the paradox, this view simply contributes to the spread of the disease and especially in Africa where there are not enough medical resources to treat patients."

Aids charities in Britain also hit out at Pope Benedict's comments.

Lisa Power, corporate head of policy at the Terrence Higgins Trust, said: "We deeply regret the continued misinformation around condoms, which remain the most effective way of preventing the spread of HIV.

"Both abstinence and condoms are valid weapons in the fight against HIV, but unfortunately abstinence has a far higher failure rate."

Some priests and nuns working with people who have contracted HIV in Africa have also questioned the logic of the Church's strict no condom policy.

The Pope has said previously that the way to tackle Aids, especially in Africa, was to follow the Church's teaching on "correct and moral human behaviour". The Church has also said that condoms are ineffective because the virus can pass through the condoms.

Two years ago there was a debate within the Church over the possible easing of restrictions on their use but in [the end](#) the blanket ban continued.

Of some 33 million people affected throughout the world, more than 27 million live in Africa. More than 25 million have died on the continent from AIDS since it emerged in the 1980s.

The World Health Organisation believes that a "consistent and correct" condom use reduces the risk of HIV infection by 90 per cent.

Benedict has said that he would address the continent's "grave problems and painful wounds" during his visit.

Africa is crucial to the Vatican because of its growing number of Roman Catholics. Within 15 years around a sixth of the world's Catholics, or 230 million people, are expected to be African.

The continent also produces a large proportion of the world's Catholic priests and there are many sub-Saharan seminarians.

The Pope is expected to appeal to rich countries which are grappling with the global financial crisis not to forget Africa's acute needs.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/cameroon/5007124/Anger-as-Pope-Benedict-XVI-says-condoms-make-Aids-worse.html>