Pope: Condom Distribution “Aggravates” AIDS Epidemic

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While in Cameroon, Pope Benedict XVI called the global AIDS epidemic “a tragedy that cannot be overcome by money alone, that cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which even aggravates the problems,” *The Daily Telegraph* reports.

Africa is important to the Vatican because of its growing number of Catholics. In the next 15 years, about a sixth of the world’s Catholics are expected to be African. The continent also produces a large portion of the world’s Catholic priests.

However, it also presents huge challenges for the Pope, including tension with Islam in some countries, competition from evangelical churches and opposition to the Catholic Church’s stance on condoms in countries where AIDS is rampant.

The Pope said that the Catholic Church is at the forefront of the battle against AIDS, advocating sexual abstinence if unmarried and fidelity within marriage as ways to fight the disease. Although Benedict’s trip includes only two of Africa’s more than 50 countries, he hopes his visit will “embrace the entire continent.”

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