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Volunteer service essential to society, pope tells charity workers

VIENNA, AUSTRIA – Pope Benedict XVI met with 1,800 representatives of volunteer organizations during his recent visit to Austria and told them their generous and unpaid service to others was essential to modern society.

“Love of neighbour” can never simply be delegated to the state but demands personal commitment in order to keep its human dimension, the pope said.

Austria has a strong history of charitable action inside and outside the country, and in a talk the pope praised what he called its remarkable “culture of volunteerism”.

He said that to allow oneself to be called to service to others, without the usual questions about whether it is useful or profitable, is a path taken by many saints through the

centuries and is no less relevant today.

Unpaid service has much to do with God’s grace, he said, and it challenges the thinking of “a culture which would calculate the cost of everything”.

“Without volunteer service, society and the common good could not, cannot and will not endure. A readiness to be at the service of others is something which surpasses the calculus of outlay and return: It shatters the rules of a market economy,” he said.

He said the state does have a responsibility to provide social services to the needy, but can never replace personal involvement. A society’s progress, he said, depends on people who do more than what is strictly their duty.

The pope said volunteerism fits perfectly with Christ’s teaching about love and sacrifice. Not everyone today has learned these lessons, he said.

“There are people who see but pretend not to see, who are faced with human needs but remain indifferent. This is part of the coldness of our present time,” he said.

The Christian, he said, has an “absolute duty” to take notice of the needs of others.



Queen of Peace parishioners enquire about volunteer opportunities at the fair.

“Live our faith: Love and serve”

SINGAPORE – To promote the spirit of volunteerism, the Catholic Social and Community Council (CSCC) is staging a series of Volunteer Fairs across 20 participating parishes at which member organizations of CSCC man booths, after weekend Mass, to explain to parishioners

how they can help disadvantaged children with their schoolwork, build houses for disaster victims, deliver freshly cooked meals to construction workers, and other services. Altogether there are more than 20 volunteer programmes being offered.

“The response has been great,” says Stefanie Herman of CSCC who is coordinating the fairs. CSCC and its member organizations have recruited more than 500 volunteers even though they have only covered 12 parishes.

“It shows that Catholics, when called to love and serve, will respond,” Herman said.

On Sep 22 and 23, fairs will be held at these parishes: Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Immaculate Heart of Mary, and Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On Sep 29 and 30, fairs will be held at these parishes: Our Lady Star of the Sea, Sts. Peter and Paul, Holy Cross, and Holy Spirit.

Catholics are encouraged to volunteer their services at these fairs or through the CSCC website at www.cscs-singapore.org.