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VATICAN: POPE CORRECTS SPEECH ON ISLAM

Vatican City, 10 Oct. (AKI) - For the fourth time since his controversial speech linking Islam to violence on 12 September which sparked widespread criticism in the Muslim world, Pope Benedict XVI returned on the issue by slightly modifying the 'lectio magistralis' at Germany's Regensburg University and adding footnotes to the text. The first draft of the speech distributed to the press on 12 September had anticipated that the final version would be released at a later date.

The final draft, released on Monday, includes a note saying: "In the Muslim world, this quotation has unfortunately been taken as an expression of my personal position, thus arousing understandable indignation."

"I hope that the reader of my text can see immediately that this sentence does not express my personal view of the Koran, for which I have the respect due to the holy book of a great religion. In quoting the text of the Emperor Manuel II, I intended solely to draw out the essential relationship between faith and reason. On this point I am in agreement with Manuel II, but without endorsing his polemic," the note went on to say.

The pontiff had already said twice - at the Angelus Sunday prayer service on 17 September and at a general audience on 20 September - that the 14th century Christian emperor Manuel II Palaiologus he had quoted linking Islam to violence did not express his own views.

Benedict also said he had only cited the emperor for his statement that "not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God's nature."

"It was purely for the sake of this statement that I quoted the dialogue between Manuel and his Persian interlocutor," the pontiff also said.

(Ebc/Aki)

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