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Sixtieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

December 10, 2008, marked the sixtieth anniversary of this declaration. We offer some relevant addresses by John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

12/11/2008

In his address to the United Nations on April 18, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI said:

"The reference to human dignity, which is the foundation and goal of the responsibility to protect, leads us to the theme we are specifically focusing upon this year, which marks the sixtieth anniversary of the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights*** .

"This document was the outcome of a convergence of different religious and cultural traditions, all of them motivated by the common desire to place the human person at the heart of institutions, laws and the workings of society, and to consider the human person essential for the world of culture, religion and science.

"Human rights are increasingly being presented as the common language and the ethical substratum of international relations. At the same time, the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human

rights all serve as guarantees safeguarding human dignity.

"It is evident, though, that the rights recognized and expounded in the *Declaration* apply to everyone by virtue of the common origin of the person, who remains the high-point of God's creative design for the world and for history. They are based on the natural law inscribed on human hearts and present in different cultures and civilizations.

"Removing human rights from this context would mean restricting their range and yielding to a relativistic conception, according to which the meaning and interpretation of rights could vary and their universality would be denied in the name of different cultural, political, social and even religious outlooks.

"This great variety of viewpoints must not be allowed to obscure the fact that not only rights are

universal, but so too is the human person, the subject of those rights."

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