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Pope expresses hope for German trip

Pope Benedict on Sunday called upon all Catholics to participate in a new evangelisation of the world, reports the Catholic News Agency, and expressed his hope for his visit to Germany this week.

"Today's liturgy reminds us that we are all called to work in the vineyard of the Lord," he told pilgrims gathered to pray the midday Angelus at his summer residence of Castel Gandolfo, south of Rome.

"He has given us diverse gifts, has assigned diverse tasks and determined diverse times for their performance. However, if we assume the work of our life with full dedication, we can expect the same pay: the joy of eternal participation the goodness of the Lord," he said.

After the Angelus, Pope Benedict addressed various language groups, including German pilgrims. He said he looked forward to his four-day visit to Germany later this week and hoped the people of his native land will "respond generously to the offer of the boundless love of God and work for the good that is in the world."

According to an AP report in the Washington Post, in a the Pope's message was broadcast on a German public television station.

The pontiff expressed excitement over the trip that begins Thursday, asking Germans to pray for him. He said he can help them be "witnesses to hope and orientation for the future."

But critics point to the declining number of Catholics in Germany.

The Pope's pilgrimage "takes place during the greatest worldwide crisis of the Roman Catholic church since the Reformation," the Catholic reform movement We Are Church said in a statement, in reference to exposes of systematic cover-ups by hierarchy of clergy sex abuse of minors.

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