Pope Benedict XVI: Condoms Aggravate HIV/AIDS

March 17, 2009 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

It's no secret that the Roman Catholic Church does not condone birth control, including condoms. It's also no secret that such beliefs have been an impediment to HIV prevention around the world.

So it should have been no surprise to me that Pope Benedict XVI is quoted in the *Telegraph* (U.K.) as saying the following before his first trip to Africa as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church:

"[HIV/AIDS is] a tragedy that cannot be overcome by money alone, that cannot be overcome through the distribution of condoms, which even aggravates the problems."

Yet, I am surprised. Well, not so much surprised as stunned. The willful disregard of evidence-based science (i.e., condoms prevent HIV) is bad enough, but the pope's characterization of it as the problem saddened me deeply.

As someone born into the Roman Catholic Church, it is especially difficult for me to reconcile how a religion that claims to represent the best spiritual interests of more than a billion people can be so out of touch with the reality of the earthly needs of its members.

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