

POPE IGNITES CONDOM DEBATE

On his flight to Cameroon yesterday, Pope Benedict XVI was asked about the Catholic Church's position on fighting AIDS. He said, in part, "One cannot overcome the problem with the distribution of condoms. On the contrary, they increase the problem."

Catholic League president Bill Donohue had this to say:

"Last year, Edward C. Green, director of the AIDS Prevention Research Project at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, wrote that 'In every African country in which HIV infections declined, this decline has been associated with a decrease in the proportion of men and women reporting more than one sex partner over the course of a year—which is exactly what fidelity programs promote.' As for condom use, Green said, 'Many countries that have not seen declines in HIV have seen increases in condom use, but in every country worldwide in which HIV has declined there have been increases in levels of faithfulness and usually abstinence as well.' The Catholic Church, it is well known, has been at the forefront of such programs. It also operates more hospitals and related medical centers for AIDS patients than any other private institution in the world.

"If condoms were the answer, then why is it that New York City, which under Mayor Michael Bloomberg has given away *tens of millions* of free condoms, has an HIV rate *three times the national average*? Furthermore, the promiscuous distribution of condoms in New York has coincided with a spike in sexually transmitted diseases of all sorts. Isn't it time we learned that condom worship is irrational?

"Anyone who thinks that condom distribution, education and/or research is going to solve a problem which is mostly a function of behavioral recklessness is positively clueless.

Not only that, such persons unwittingly contribute to the problem by diverting attention and resources away from that which works."