

Fight terrorism the spiritual way

Pope's envoy stresses there's no link between religion and militants

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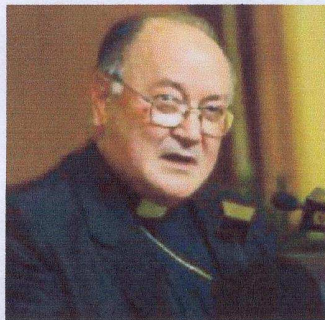
THE Pope's special envoy, Cardinal Martino, called for revolution of the spiritual kind yesterday when he spoke on how religions can promote peace and solidarity to meet the greatest challenge of our time: Terrorism.

"Spiritual revolution is so urgently needed in our modern day," he told a gathering of Government officials and leaders of the various faiths in Singapore. This is to counter terrorism which is tearing the international community apart.

"Public opinion is often led to believe that there is a connection between terrorism and religion. Nothing could be further from the truth," he said.

Such an erroneous conception can be corrected by cooperation between religions. This would show, in the behaviour of their own members, the incompatibility between religion and violence, he added.

"This is a new area for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue and cooperation, a new form of service that religions can ren-



THE KEY TO JUSTICE: Cardinal Martino stressed on the importance of moderation and inter-faith understanding to maintaining peace.

der to humanity and to peace among peoples," said Cardinal Martino.

He also noted that "the recruitment of terrorists is more easily accomplished in social contexts where hatred is sown, rights are trampled, and in situations where injustices have been tolerated for too long".

In his welcoming speech, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, and Second Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, said Singapore does not take racial and religious harmony for granted, seeing how tensions with racial or religious overtones have impacted on social cohesion

in many countries.

Efforts to build bridges across communities have picked up momentum and focus with the introduction of the Community Engagement Programme in February.

"We saw a need to enhance relationships across leaders in different segments of the community and build consensus on how we should respond to eventualities, so that unfortunate incidents will ... make us rally together to support one another," said Dr Balakrishnan.

Cardinal Martino, in Singapore to celebrate the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Singapore, was the first Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to the Republic back in 1981.

Describing his visit as one filled with "many comforting memories", he lauded Singapore's commitment to respect for diversity.

He hailed the fact that all the different religious faiths upheld a common commitment to the good of the nation without giving up their specific traits.

"I am convinced that a sincere religious sentiment is the antidote for violence," he said.

Stressing that love is the key to justice and reconciliation, Cardinal Martino urged the promotion of peace through daily and countless gestures of peace.

Receive tsunami alerts via SMS

GERMAN professors have launched a system to warn subscribers of an impending tsunami, wherever they are, via a mobile text message.

Such a system could prevent tragedies like the 2004 tsunami in Asia where killer waves left about 200,000 people dead and nearly 50,000 missing.

The tsunami alarm system picks up seismic signals from global stations and consolidates the information. If there is a danger of a tsunami, an alarm is sent out to subscribers via an SMS.

Professor Dr Eduard Heindl, one of the inventors of the system, said: "Last December in Japan, we had an earthquake with a tsunami generated and we sent a warning 10 minutes before radio stations in Japan were able to disseminate this information.

He added: "People always switch on their mobile phones, unlike the radio which may not always be turned on."

The take-up rate for the alarm system has been good among travellers in Europe and its inventors hope for similar success in Asia, especially in coastal areas bordering the Indian and Pacific oceans.

The system costs about \$60 for a year's subscription, while a monthly service costs \$20.

Visit www.tsunami-alarm-system.com for details. — CHANNEL NEWSASIA

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