

Briefly noted

News in the [December 25, 2007](#) issue

The second encyclical from Pope Benedict XVI, warning against secular ideas of progress, has prompted a lively debate among newspaper commentators in Italy—some labeling the pope a reactionary, but others springing to the pontiff's defense. According to Vatican-watcher John Allen, who writes for the *National Catholic Reporter*, the encyclical could be seen as a reworking of ideas already expressed by the pope when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the Vatican's doctrinal guardian. In essence, Allen said, the message is: "If human beings place their hopes for justice, redemption and a better life exclusively in this-worldly forces, whether it's science, politics, or anything else, they're lost. Instead, ultimate hope—what the pope describes as 'the great hope'—lies only in God, because only through the moral and spiritual wisdom acquired through faith can technology and political structures be directed towards ends which are truly human."

In an unprecedented protest, more than 30 bishops joined scores of priests, nuns and church activists in a sit-in near the Indian parliament in New Delhi to demand an end to the decades-old discrimination against Christian Dalits ("untouchables"). "We want the government to end this discrimination," demanded Church of South India bishop Jeypaul David, president of the National Council of Churches in India, addressing the sit-in on November 29. Thirty bishops from NCCI churches, which include 29 Orthodox and Protestant denominations, joined six Roman Catholic bishops in the protest.

Anglican archbishop Desmond Tutu has received the first-ever Cathedral Prize for Advancement in Religious Understanding from the Washington National Cathedral for promoting justice, tolerance and interfaith conversation. Samuel T. Lloyd III, dean of the cathedral, gave the retired South African archbishop the prize November 9 in recognition of his "rare example of Christian leadership in the civic realm."