

Pope links violence in God's name to Antichrist

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March 10, 2011

VATICAN CITY (RNS) Violence committed in the name of God or religion is a "favorite instrument of the Antichrist," Pope Benedict XVI writes in a new book on the life and teachings of Jesus.

"Violence does not build up the kingdom of God, the kingdom of humanity," Benedict writes. "On the contrary, it is a favorite instrument of the Antichrist, however idealistic its religious motivation may be. It serves not humanity, but inhumanity."

The passage appears in "Jesus of Nazareth -- Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection," which was published in English and seven other languages on Thursday (March 10), with an initial printing of 1.2 million copies.

According to its American publisher, Ignatius Press, 90,000 copies of the English edition had been sold before publication.

The book is a sequel to the pope's 2007 bestseller, "Jesus of Nazareth," which explored Jesus' public ministry from his baptism to the Transfiguration. In the trilogy that he began before his 2005 election as pope, Benedict studies the Gospels in light of the work of other scholars, including those who have sought to discover the "historical Jesus."

In pre-publication excerpts that were released March 2, Benedict wrote that the Jewish people were not responsible for Jesus' crucifixion, and their descendants have not inherited blame for his death.