

# *Pope Francis Addresses United Nations General Assembly*

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United Nations, September 25 (RHC)-- Pope Francis addressed the United Nations General Assembly on Friday morning, issuing a sweeping call for peace and environmental justice. And he placed blame for the exploitation of natural resources on “a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity.”

Standing before the General Assembly, Pope Francis endorsed United Nations efforts to reach a global compact to fight poverty and climate change. He also chided world powers for putting political interests ahead of human suffering in the Middle East.

The Pontiff repeated his concern over persecuted Christians and, foremost, demanded that action be taken on behalf of the global poor. Pope Francis said: “They are cast off by society, forced to live off what is discarded and suffer unjustly from the consequences of abuse of the environment.”

In his first remarks at the United Nations, Pope Francis on Friday called staff members “the backbone” of the international organization and asked them to pray for him as he would pray for them as they support the work of world leaders.

Before his UN speech, Pope Francis praised not the leaders at the top of the United Nations but the “translators and interpreters, cleaners and cooks, maintenance and security personnel.” He drew some laughter when he thanked those who’d arranged his visit – a mammoth task with security, protocol and

other logistics – at a particularly busy time of year because of the annual General Assembly meeting of global heads of state.

UN staff members burst into cheers and applause as Pope Francis, led by UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, entered the room. Ban welcomed him in Spanish and thanked the Pope for taking time to address “the heart and soul” of UN work toward peace, development and human rights.

Before the address, reports said, Ban showed Francis “The Golden Rule” painting by Norman Rockwell that hangs in his conference room – a nod to the pope’s mention of the maxim during his speech before the U.S. Congress on Thursday.

After the United Nations, Pope Francis led a multi-faith worship service at the 9/11 memorial site, where nearly 3,000 were killed in the September 11th terrorist attacks. Tickets were distributed by lottery to victims’ families, survivors, rescuers and recovery workers to watch the Pope join other religious leaders for a ceremony focused on peace.

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