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Heralding the necessity for human rights and freedom, Pope Benedict XVI spoke before the United Nations General Assembly during his historic visit to the United States. During a magisterial address to delegates from 192 member states, the Catholic Pontiff delivered a powerful message, "The promotion of human rights remains the most effective strategy for eliminating inequities between countries and social groups, and for increasing security."

(...) He implored, "In the name of freedom there has to be a correlation between rights and duties, by which every person is called to assume responsibility for his or her choices."

(...) Importantly the German-born Pontiff stressed the concept of the **responsibility to protect**.

"Every state has the primary duty to protect its own population from grave and sustained violations of human rights as well as from the consequences of humanitarian crises, whether natural or man-made." He beseeched, "If states are unable to guarantee such protection, the international community must intervene with the juridical means provided in the United Nations Charter." He warned "it is indifference or failure to intervene that can do the real damage." Read that again and recall Rwanda.

Fully aware of the many global crises facing governments, Darfur, West Africa, Congo Somalia, etc, the Pope though not mentioning any specific crises or cases, stated less than cryptically, "When faced with new and insistent challenges, it is a mistake to fall back on a pragmatic approach, limited to determining 'common ground' minimal in content and weak in its effect." One could easily interpret this as a rebuke to bickering UN member states who in their aim to always achieve consensus in crisis, often agree on action too little too late.

Following his speech to the delegates, the Pontiff (...) paid special tribute to the global humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts, as well as to the sacrifices of those staffers killed in the line of duty. (...)

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