



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL *COR UNUM*

Friday, 21 November 2003

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*1. It is a great pleasure to receive you today, Members of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, who have come to Rome for your Dicastery's Plenary Assembly. I heartily greet you all. I greet, in particular, Archbishop Paul Josef Cordes, to whom I wish to address a word of cordial appreciation for the respectful thoughts that he has addressed to me. Charity towards God and neighbour is a clear demonstration of the Church's faith in the Lord, who "gave himself up for us" (Eph 5: 2). From the pierced heart of Jesus crucified is born the Church, who consequently is committed to communicating to the world the love she has received from him. She also communicates it to the people of our time, above all to the poor and those who find themselves in any type of need. It is this work, dear Members of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, that the Pope entrusts to you, so that you can be a support for so many brothers and sisters in need, allowing them to experience the divine tenderness and the loving closeness of the Successor of Peter.2. The Church is at the service of men and women in all their various and concrete material and spiritual needs. Since man "is the primary and fundamental way for the Church", as I wrote in the Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* at the very beginning of my Pontificate (cf. n. 14), the attention that must be given to him impels us to consider in depth the longing for fullness of life which is in his heart. The theme that you have chosen for your meeting - "*The religious dimension in our charitable work*" - highlights this need. This actually takes into consideration that, in bringing comfort to those who are hungry, sick, alone and suffering, that deep aspiration that beats within every human creature - to know God - is not neglected. Indeed, all of us are searching for answers to the great questions of existence. We Christians know that only in Jesus is the true and complete response given to the human spirit's restlessness. It is for this reason that the Church does not limit herself to satisfying only the material expectations of those in difficulty; her charitable action is not exhausted by building structures and through philanthropic works, praiseworthy as these may be. She also tries to meet the more hidden existential questions, even if they are not clearly expressed; and with simplicity and pastoral prudence she does not hesitate to witness to Christ, who reveals the tender, merciful face of God the Father.3. Dear Members of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, I am sincerely grateful to you for your daily work and for the help that you give to the Holy See. The deliberations of these days will compel you to show the meaning and Gospel value of the service of charity which the Church exercises through her charitable institutions and through the witness of so many dedicated persons. Numerous shining examples exist of this loving service towards God and neighbour. I point out to all Teresa of Calcutta, whom I

personally accompanied for many years and who recently I had the joy of inscribing in the roll of the Blessed. From Heaven, may she intercede for you and make your work fruitful. May Mary Most Holy, Mother of Mercy and Comforter of the afflicted, keep watch over you always. With these sentiments, I warmly impart the propitious Apostolic Blessing upon each one of you and upon all the activities which the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* accomplishes with generous commitment.

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