



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE PHILIPPINES,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA

LITURGY OF THE WORD FOR THE SICK AND THE SUFFERING

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II

*Church of St Joseph, Boroko
Wednesday, 18 January 1995*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
Grace and peace to you in Jesus Christ!*

1. I am pleased to have this opportunity to meet you and to say a few words of encouragement. *Caring for the sick and the suffering has always been a special concern of the Lord's followers.* From the Church's earliest days, when missionaries brought the Good News of the Gospel to far distant lands, they also brought love and compassion for people suffering from disease. It was this charity which caused many native peoples to welcome these messengers of Christ and made them wish to learn about God who inspired such selfless acts of kindness.

This is why I come to you today, to assure you that the Church, like Christ himself, is close to you who suffer. She commends you to the Lord. She prays that he will give you the consolation and hope which will bring you peace.

2. *Human suffering is a great mystery*, but our Christian tradition helps us to understand it. As we are told in the First Letter of Peter, we may be called to experience suffering in our lives, but only through a faith which is tested shall we obtain the salvation of our souls (Cf. 1Pt. 1: 6-9). *The only way to share in Christ's glorious victory over sin and death is by being united with him in his Passion.* It is Jesus' Death and Resurrection which show us the meaning of human suffering.

Believers who suffer in union with Christ and surrender themselves to him help make his salvation known to others.

When you suffer with Christ, you show that you are blessed because, as the Lord himself tells us in the Gospel passage, you have not taken offense at him (Cf. Lk. 7: 23). Jesus' Passion and Crucifixion is not a stumbling block for you, but a source of joy and hope. Accepting your suffering in this way, you allow others to see the true dignity of the human person. You reveal a God who loves us so much that he became one of us in order to share our pain and sorrows. You make known the truth that God will transform death itself into a beautiful future where "he will wipe away every tear" (Rev. 21: 4) from our eyes.

3. Dear Friends, you see how important you are! So as you suffer in union with Christ *be united to him in prayer*. Remember Job: after enduring terrible pain and affliction, he prayed for his friends and "the Lord accepted Job's prayer" (Iob. 42: 9). You too can pray very effectively for your fellow men and women, for the Church and for the world.

I wish to encourage you: May you know ever more deeply the presence of Jesus himself as you try to embrace him and his Cross. My prayers and the prayers of the Church are with you always.

And I should say that the Beatification of Peter To Rot should give great encouragement to all of you, to all the suffering Churches, suffering persons, suffering families.

He is a martyr and martyrdom is suffering. And he as a martyr, as a Blessed of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, is a Patron for all of you. He is an example of how to live in grace, being a son of God, and secondly, he is also your intercessor. Pray to him, invoke him in your sufferings, for your needs. You and Peter are of the same continent, of the same nation, of the same Church. You are near to us.

You are reaching the whole Communion of the Saints and God himself in his mercy.

May God and the Virgin Mary bless you all.