



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1986

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Gospel gives us the law of charity, so well defined by the words and constant example of Christ, the Good Samaritan. He asks us to love God and to love our brothers and sisters, especially those in greatest need. Charity rids us of our selfishness; it breaks down the walls of our isolation; it opens our eyes to our neighbour, to those more distant from us and to the whole humanity. Charity is demanding, but it is also heartening, for it is the carrying out of our basic Christian vocation and makes us sharers in the Lord's love.

The age in which we live, like every age, is the age of charity. There is certainly no lack of opportunities for practising it. Every day the media engage our eyes and hearts, bringing us the urgent and desperate appeals of millions of our less fortunate brethren, afflicted by some natural or man-made disaster, those who are hungry, wounded in body or soul, sick, dispossessed, exiled, isolated and deprived of all help. They reach out to us Christians who wish to live the Gospel and the one great Commandment of Love.

Thus we are well informed. But do we feel involved? After reading our newspaper or watching our television screen, how can we travel as indifferent tourists or make judgments on events, without venturing outside our comfortable milieu? Can we refuse to be disturbed, bothered, put out or jostled by these millions of human beings who are also our brothers and sisters, created by God and called to eternal life the same as we are? How can we remain indifferent before those children with their despairing faces and skeleton-like bodies? Can our Christian conscience remain uncaring in the midst of this world full of suffering? Does the parable of the Good Samaritan still have something to say to us?

At this beginning of Lent, the season of penance, reflection and generosity, Christ appeals to all of you once more. The Church wishes to be present in the world and especially in the world of

suffering, and she counts on you. The sacrifices which you make, however small, will save bodies and bring fresh life to souls, and the expression “civilization of love” will no longer be devoid of meaning.

Charity does not hesitate, for it is the expression of our faith. So open your hands wide and share with all those who are your neighbours.

“Through love be servants of one another” (*Gal 5:13*).

JOHN PAUL II

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