



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1989

“Give us this day our daily bread” (*Mt 6:11*). The second part of the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples and which all Christians repeat fervently every day begins with this petition.

This one petition to our Father in heaven is uttered by all the men and women of different races who make up the great Christian community, but by each with a different level of meaning. For many people it has the sound of a calm and confident petition. For others it is a cry of grief and pain because they are unable to satisfy their physical hunger due to the real lack of necessary food.

Dear sons and daughters, I place before you, with great concern and hope, this problem of hunger in the world as the theme for your reflection and for your apostolic action in charity and in solidarity during Lent, 1989. Generous and voluntary fasting by those of you who have food will enable you to share the privation of those many others who regularly must search for food. The fasting of those of you who have food during Lent, a fasting which is part of our rich Christian tradition, will dispose you more fully in heart and in spirit to share your goods in solidarity with those who have little or nothing.

Hunger in the world strikes millions of human beings in almost every country, although it is more unrelentingly concentrated in some continents and nations where it decimates the population and jeopardizes their development. The lack of food recurs in cycles in some regions for very complex reasons which need to be addressed with the joint help of all peoples.

In this century we rejoice in the advances of science and technology, and with good reason, but we must advance in a human fashion. We cannot remain passive and indifferent in the face of the tragedy of so many people who lack sufficient food, who are forced to live on a subsistence diet and who consequently encounter almost insurmountable obstacles to their proper development.

I unite my voice with that of all believers in asking our common Father to “give us this day our daily bread”. Certainly “no one lives on bread alone” (*Mt 4:4*), but material food is a compelling need, and even our Lord Jesus Christ acted effectively to feed the hungry crowds.

Faith must be accompanied by concrete actions. I invite everyone to become aware of the serious scourge of hunger in the world in order to undertake new initiatives and to support already existing ones in favour of those who suffer from hunger, in order to share their goods with those who have none, in order to strengthen programmes directed to making people self-sufficient in providing their own food.

I wish to encourage all the Catholic organisations fighting hunger, and all governmental and non-governmental organisms as well who do their best in search of solutions, to continue without interruption to give help to those in need.

“Our Father who art in heaven... give us this day our daily bread”, so that none of your children may lack the fruits of the earth, so that none may suffer any longer the anguish of not having daily bread for themselves and their own, so that all of us, in solidarity, filled with that immense love you have for us, may learn to distribute the bread you so generously give us, so that we may learn to give a place at our table to those whom the world considers little and weak, so that one day we may all be worthy to sit down together at your heavenly table.

JOHN PAUL II