



The Holy See

**APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE TO INDIA ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
ON OCCASION OF THE MEETING WITH MOTHER THERESA
DURING THE VISIT TO "NIRMAL HRIDAY ASHRAM" Calcutta (India)**

Monday, 3 February 1986

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am grateful to God that my first stop in Calcutta has been at Nirmal Hriday Ashram, a place that bears witness to the primacy of love.

When Jesus Christ was teaching his disciples how they could best show their love for him, he said: " Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" . Through Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity, and through the many others who have served here, Jesus has been deeply loved in people whom society often considers " the least of our brethren".

Nirmal Hriday is a place of suffering, a house familiar with anguish and pain, a home for the destitute and dying. But, at the same time, Nirmal Hriday is a place of hope, a house built on courage and faith, a home where love reigns, a home filled with love.

In Nirmal Hriday, the mystery of human suffering meets the mystery of faith and love. And in this meeting, the deepest questions of human existence make themselves heard. The pain-filled body and spirit cries out: "Why? What is the purpose of suffering? Why must I die?" And the answer that comes, often in unspoken ways of kindness and compassion, is filled with honesty and faith: " I cannot fully answer all your questions; I cannot take away all your pain. But of this I am sure: God loves you with an everlasting love. You are precious in his sight. In him I love you too. For in God we are truly brothers and sisters".

Nirmal Hriday proclaims the profound dignity of every human person. The loving care which is shown here bears witness to the truth that the worth of a human being is not measured by usefulness or talents, by health or sickness, by age or creed or race. Our human dignity comes from God our Creators in whose image we are all made. No amount of privation or suffering can ever remove this dignity, for we are always precious in the eyes of God.

The Apostle Saint John tells us: "Our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active" . May these words of Saint John be true for each one of us. May the courageous love and living faith which we find here at Nirmal Hriday inspire in us the same real and active love.

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