



The Holy See

LETTER OF PAUL VI TO THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To Our Venerable Brothers the Archbishops and Bishops of the United States of America.

For the Church the season of Lent is a period of intense and prayerful reflection upon the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. A redeemed people humbly and lovingly contemplates its Savior and thus fulfills what the Letter to the Hebrews urges : "Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who inspires and perfects our faith" (*Hebr. 12, 2*). This same Letter tells us what lessons can be gained from this contemplation: "For the sake of the joy which lay before him, he endured the cross, heedless of its shame. He has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God" (*Ibid.*).

Dear brothers, we do not have to tell you of the infinite love which led our Lord to that Cross. Reflecting upon that love, Christians are moved to repentance as they recognize their short-comings and their sinfulness. The season of Lent becomes, therefore, a time of penance during which the Church expresses by her way of life sorrow for sin.

Penance demonstrates also a newness of love based on the love of the Lord himself who died for all. It thus becomes a new concern for others in imitation of Christ who was concerned for the salvation of all. It becomes a new willingness to share with others in imitation of Christ, who through his Death and Resurrection made man a sharer in the life of God. It becomes a new giving of one's self according to the example of Christ, who gave himself to death on the Cross for mankind.

It is very fitting that during this season of Lent you once again appeal to your people to contribute to the fund which makes possible those greatly needed works of assistance for the poverty-stricken and indigent of so many countries around the world.

Mankind today is seeking a new earth: new not because it will be filled with the superfluous luxuries that technological and industrial progress can provide; but new because the hungry will be fed, the homeless housed, the ill cared for, the illiterate educated—a world where all men can live more humanly. This will be a new earth of justice and love in which those who have been blessed

with much will share what they have with those who have less. And for the Christian who has received the gift of eternal life the chance to help others becomes the occasion to express gratitude for the salvation received from the Lord.

Dear brothers, we are confident of your people's continued generosity in coming to the help of their many brothers and sisters in want. We give thanks to Almighty God for what has already been done through a sense of justice, goodwill and charity, and with affection in the Lord we impart to you and to the beloved faithful of your country our special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, January 8th, 1972.

PAULUS PP. VI

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