



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI FOR LENT 1975

Dear Sons and Daughters, “The poor you always have with you” (Jn 12:8). These words of Christ to the Apostles are full of meaning. It almost sounds as though the efforts of Christian charity and human justice were destined to be always defeated. And would not an overall view of our times seem to confirm this? Even though we appear to have all the means of fighting poverty, we still hear of wars, famines and disasters. But, for the Christian, the fact that such situations continually recur does not mean that they are inevitable. The Christian rather understands the words of Jesus in the sense that none of his followers can ignore the fact that Jesus identified himself with the poor. Until the end of time, the poor are “with” Jesus. They are his partners, his companions, his brothers and sisters. The Christian, precisely because he is a Christian, must take his place beside the destitute. He must give of himself to assist them in their immediate needs. He must commit himself to helping, in many different ways, to build a better world – a more just world. Lent is an appropriate time for this exercise of self-denial, because it reminds Christians who they are. It puts them on their guard against the satisfaction of a comfortable existence and against the temptations of living in abundance. In this Holy Year, which is dedicated to reconciliation, each individual is challenged by what reconciliation implies: giving and sharing within the human family. If each one lets his brothers and sisters come into his own life, if he shares with them of his substance rather than of his surplus, then he overcomes many obstacles to reconciliation and attains renewal through real detachment. This Year of Jubilee requires of us a witness of complete solidarity with those whom Jesus particularly identified himself. It will be one of the most significant proofs that we can give to our brothers and sisters that this year is “Holy” for all mankind. Yes, this is what we ask of you today at the beginning of Lent – a genuine solidarity, a practical solidarity with Christ’s poor – and we ask it of you in the name of Jesus. And with deep affection for all of you, our sons and daughters throughout the world, we bless you all: in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. **PAUL VI** Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana