The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO SRI LANKA AND THE PHILIPPINES
(12-19 JANUARY 2015)

MEETING WITH PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS PEOPLE, SEMINARIANS AND FAMILIES OF SURVIVORS

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Cathedral of the Transfiguration of Our Lord, Palo
Saturday, 17 January 2015

[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I greet all of you with great affection in the Lord. I am happy that we are able to meet in this Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord. This house of prayer, along with many others, has been repaired thanks to the remarkable generosity of many people. It stands as an eloquent sign of the immense effort of rebuilding which you and your neighbors have undertaken in the wake of the devastation caused by Typhoon Yolanda. It is also a concrete reminder to all of us that, even amid disaster and suffering, our God is constantly at work, making all things new.

Many of you have suffered greatly, not only from the destruction caused by the storm, but from the loss of family members and friends. Today let us commend to God's mercy all those who have died, and invoke his consolation and peace upon all who still grieve. May we remember in a particular way those among us whose pain makes it hard to see the way forward. At the same time, let us thank the Lord for all those who have labored in these months to clear away the rubble, to visit the sick and dying, to comfort the grieving and to bury the dead. Their goodness, and the generous aid which came from so many people throughout the world, are a real sign that God never abandons us!

Here, in a special way, I would like to thank the many priests and religious who responded with such overwhelming generosity to the desperate needs of the people of the areas hardest hit. By your presence and your charity, you bore witness to the beauty and truth of the Gospel. You made the Church present as a source of hope, healing and mercy. Together with so many of your neighbors, you also demonstrated the deep faith and the resilience of the Filipino people. The many stories of goodness and self-sacrifice which emerged from these dark days need to be remembered and passed down for future generations.

A few moments ago, I blessed the new Center for the Poor, which stands as another sign of the Church's care and concern for our brothers and sisters in need. How many they are! And how much our Lord loves them! Today, from this place which has known such profound suffering and human need, I ask that even more be done for the poor. Above all, I ask that the poor throughout this country be treated fairly – that their dignity be respected, that political and economic policies be just and inclusive, that opportunities for employment and education be developed, and that obstacles to the delivery of social services be removed. Our treatment of the poor is the criterion on which each of us will be judged (cf. *Mt* 25:40, 45). I ask all of you, and all responsible for the good of society, to renew your commitment to social justice and the betterment of the poor, both here and in the Philippines as a whole.

Finally, I would like to say a word of sincere thanks to the young people present, including the seminarians and young religious. Many of you showed heroic generosity in the aftermath of the typhoon. I hope that you will always realize that true happiness comes from helping others, giving ourselves to them in self-sacrifice, mercy and compassion. In this way you will be a powerful force for the renewal of society, not only in the work of restoring buildings but more importantly, in building up God's kingdom of holiness, justice and peace in your native land.

Dear priests and religious, dear families and friends, in this Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord let us ask that our lives continue to be sustained and transfigured by the power of his resurrection. I commend all of you to the loving protection of Mary, Mother of the Church. May she obtain for you, and for all the beloved people of these lands, the Lord's blessings of comfort, joy and peace. God bless you all!

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