



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II FOR LENT 1983

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need” (*Acts 2:44-45*).

These words of Saint Luke echo vividly in my heart at this time when we are preparing to celebrate once more the liturgical season of Lent. These are the precious weeks offered by the Church to all Christians, in order to help them to reflect upon their profound identity as children of the heavenly Father and as brothers and sisters of all human beings. It is also meant to help them find a renewed enthusiasm for sharing in a practical and generous way, for God himself has called us to base our lives upon charity.

Our relationships with our neighbour are therefore of prime importance. And when I use the word “neighbour”, I obviously mean the people living side-by-side with us, in our families, where we live, in our village or town. But it is just as much a matter of the people whom we meet at work, and people who are suffering or sick, or lonely or really poor. My neighbour also includes all those who are geographically very far away, or who are exiled from their own country, or who are without work, food and clothes, and often without freedom. My neighbour includes all those people who have suffered and have been almost or completely ruined by unforeseeable and tragic catastrophes, which have plunged them into physical and moral misery, and also in many cases into the grief of losing those most dear to them.

Lent is really an earnest appeal from the Lord to undertake inner renewal, both personal and community: renewal in prayer and a return to the sacraments, but equally through the manifestation of charity, by the personal and collective sacrificing of time, money and resources of all sorts, so as to meet the needs and the distress of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Sharing is a duty that cannot be shirked by any people of good will, least of all the disciples of

Christ. There are many possible forms of sharing, ranging from voluntary work in which one offers one's services with a spontaneity worthy of the Gospel, from generous and even repeated offerings from our surplus and sometimes even from what we ourselves need, to offering work to the unemployed or to those who are giving up all hope.

Finally, this Lent of the year 1983 will be a special grace, for it will coincide with the opening of the Holy Year of Redemption. This is an event that can deeply stimulate the lives of Christians, so that they correspond still more closely to the divine calling which is theirs: to become children of God and true brothers and sisters of all, after the model of Christ.

On the day of the Solemn Inauguration of my Pontificate, I said: "Open wide all your doors to Christ!" And today I say to you: Open wide your hands in order really to give all you can to your needy brothers and sisters! Do not be afraid! Each and every one of you, be new and untiring dispensers of the Charity of Christ.

JOHN PAUL II