



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO PAKISTAN, PHILIPPINES I, GUAM (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II), JAPAN, ANCHORAGE (UNITED STATES OF AMERICA II)
(FEBRUARY 16-27, 1981)

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
DURING HIS VISIT TO THE REFUGEES CAMP IN MORONG***

Saturday, 21 February

*Your Excellency, Mrs. Marcos,
Mr. Delegate,
Dear brothers and sisters,*

1. I am happy to be with you today, to tell you of the concern of the whole Church for you and for all who have been forced, due to unfortunate circumstances beyond their own control, to flee their native land. I would like this occasion to serve as a *symbol of the Church's solidarity* with all refugees, as a symbol of the visit I would like to make, if it were possible, to every camp or settlement of refugees in the world. At this moment in history when we are witnessing with alarm an ever increasing number of people being forced to abandon their homeland, I am grateful to God for this opportunity to meet you and to assure you, each one of you, of my heartfelt concern and oneness with you in prayer.

2. I take this occasion to express my admiration for all who have participated in the various programs for aiding refugees : the governments—including that of the Philippines—that have received refugees on a temporary basis, the individuals and organizations that have provided badly-needed financial assistance, and in particular those countries that have offered a permanent residence for these displaced persons and have assisted them in the slow, painstaking process of joining the mainstream of life in a new culture and society.

It is also fitting to mention the deserving work of the High Commission for Refugees which faces a

most difficult task, yet one which is greatly needed. All these endeavors are indeed praiseworthy, for they bear witness to the inviolable value and dignity of every human being. At the same time, they are a *sign of hope* in that they signal *an awakening consciousness on the part of humanity* to the cry of the poor and defenseless.

I must not fail to mention the important contribution which has been made by local Churches around the world, a contribution which has been inspired by the *evangelical spirit of charity*. In particular I am thinking of all the volunteer personnel who work in the camps and receiving centers, men and women who have extended hospitality in circumstances which often are very trying and difficult. To these volunteers and to the organizations which they represent, as well as to all those who work day after day and week after week assisting the refugees in the process of adapting to their new situations, I extend a special word of encouragement and praise.

3. The fact that the Church carries out extensive relief efforts on behalf of refugees, especially in recent years, should not be a source of surprise to anyone. Indeed this is *an integral part of the Church's mission* in the world. The Church is ever mindful that Jesus Christ himself was a refugee, that as a child he had to flee with his parents from his native land in order to escape persecution. In every age therefore the Church feels herself called to help refugees. And she will continue to do so, to the full extent that her limited means allow.

In this part of Asia, the number of natural disasters and human catastrophes has been many. There have been earthquakes, typhoons, floods and civil strife, to name only a few. To the victims of these various calamities the Church extends a helping hand, and she seeks to work in close collaboration with those governments and international organizations which are engaged in the same relief activities. But of all the human tragedies of our day, perhaps the greatest is that of refugees. To them especially the Church reaches out, desiring to place herself at their service.

4. Jesus Christ once told a parable which I should like to recall at this time. This parable is known even among those of you who do not share the Christian faith. It is a parable which appeals to the hearts of all people of good will, not only to the followers of Christ; it is the *parable of the Good Samaritan*.

The Gospel of Luke records the parable, telling how a man had been robbed, beaten and left beside the road half dead. According to the Gospel account, "a Samaritan who was journeying along came on him and was moved to pity at the sight. He approached him and dressed his wounds, pouring in oil and wine. He then hoisted him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, where he cared for him. The next day he took out two silver pieces and gave them to the innkeeper with the request : Look after him, and if there is any further expense I will repay you on my way back"^[1].

The Good Samaritan does not mind that he might be criticized for helping someone who has

"tradi-tionally" been considered his enemy. And he does not ask him any questions : where he comes from, why he is there, where he is going. He asks no questions at all. Very simply the Good Samaritan sees the injured person in need, and he spontaneously helps him up, takes him to an inn, and sees that he receives all he needs to get well again. This is charity ! A *charity which makes no exception* because of the other person's ethnic origin, religious allegiance or political preference, no exceptions whatsoever ; a charity which sees the person as a brother or sister in need and seeks only one thing : to be of immediate assistance, to be a neighbor.

May this same charity motivate all of us who live in a world approaching the end of the second millennium ! May it inspire all of us to have compassion for the millions of refugees who cry out for our help!

5. My brothers and sisters present here, and all you refugees who may hear my voice, may you *never lose confidence* in the rest of mankind or think that you are forgotten. For you have not been rejected by everyone. You are not looked upon as a burden which is too heavy to bear. In every country on the face of the earth there are men and women of good will who care about you, who are concerned about your future, who remember you each day in their prayers.

6. Finally, I ask everyone to join me in a *heartfelt appeal to the nations*. I appeal, in the presence of the Lord of history and before the Supreme Judge of human hearts, on behalf of all the displaced persons throughout the world. I appeal for increased aid for them, so that present efforts may be sustained, strengthened and reinforced. I appeal for continued prayers for all the refugees throughout the world, and for the warmth of human concern and fraternal love towards every brother and sister who needs our solidarity and support.

May God bless you all !

[1] Lk 10:33-35.