



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

ANGELUS

Fifth Sunday of Lent, 28 March 2004

1. In my [Lenten Message](#) this year I asked that *children* be put at the centre of the Christian communities' attention. Many of them are victims of dangerous diseases, including tuberculosis and AIDS, are deprived of education and *go hungry*. Starvation and malnutrition, aggravated by disconcerting gaps in health care, continue to be the daily cause of death for many of these little ones who are even denied the minimum indispensable for their survival.

2. In some corners of the earth, especially in the poorest countries, children and adolescents are the victims of a terrible form of violence: they are *enlisted to fight* in the so-called "forgotten wars".

Indeed, they suffer a doubly scandalous aggression: they *are made victims of war*, and at the same time forced to *play the lead in it*, swept away in the hatred of adults. Stripped of everything, they see their future threatened by a nightmare difficult to dispel.

3. Our youngest "brothers and sisters" who suffer from hunger, war and diseases are launching an *anguished appeal* to the adult world. May their cry of pain not go unheard! Jesus reminds us: "*Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me*" (Mt 18: 5).

The Lenten season spurs Christians to accept these words of the Gospel more generously in order to express them in courageous interventions for children at risk and abandoned.

May the Virgin Mother of God help children in difficulty and bring success to the efforts of all those who seek lovingly to alleviate their sufferings.

I wish you all a good Sunday.

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