



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO KOREA, PAPUA NEW GUINEA,

SOLOMON ISLANDS AND THAILAND **ADDRESS OF POPE JOHN PAUL II**

TO THE REFUGEES IN THE CAMP OF PHANAT NIKHOM *Refugee Camp at Phanat Nikhom (Thailand)*

Friday, 11 May 1984

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I have greatly desired to meet you during my visit to Thailand. Although my stay here at Phanat Nikhom is very brief, it has a deep meaning for me.

I want you to know that my words transcend all barriers of speech: they are spoken in the *language of the heart*. My heart goes out to you. It is the heart of a *brother* who comes to you in the name of Jesus Christ to bring a message of compassion, consolation and hope; it is a heart that embraces each and every one of you as friends and fellow human beings; a heart that reaches out to all those round the world who share your condition and experience life as refugees.

2. Listen to these words that come from my heart: *I want you to know of my love*. We are truly brothers and sisters, members of the same human family, sons and daughters of the same loving Father. I wish to share with you your sufferings, your hardships, your pain, so that you may know that someone cares for you, sympathizes with your plight, and works to help you find relief, comfort and a reason for hope.

Have faith in yourselves. Never forget your identity as free people who have a rightful place in this world. Never lose your personality as a people! Remain firmly rooted in your respective cultures, from which the world can learn much and come to appreciate you in your uniqueness.

Have hope in the future. Our world is in full development. It needs you and your contributions. Take every opportunity offered you to study a language and perfect a skill, in order to be able to adapt socially to the country which will open its doors to you and be enriched by your presence.

3. To the Catholics among you I wish to say a special word: God never said that suffering is a

good thing in itself; but he taught us through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for our sins, that our sufferings, when joined to those of Christ, have value for the salvation of the world. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who rose on the third day, is the foundation of our hope, now and in the future.

4. My dear refugees, the final word which I speak as your brother is to say a heartfelt thank-you on your behalf to all who are assisting you at this difficult time in your lives:

to the Government of Thailand, who has enabled me to make this visit, and who has opened the doors of this country to so many refugees from other South-east Asian countries;

to the many national and international organizations, both of a confessional and non-confessional nature, which have heard the cries of suffering from their fellow human beings and have responded in so many ways in this urgent mission of mercy; and finally

to the numerous volunteers, especially the many young people, who have come from all parts of the world to place themselves at the service of the refugees.

I thank you all for your generosity, your sacrifices and your humanitarian concern.

5. Dear friends: know that I do everything I can to help you and to ask others to help you. I am close to you in your suffering, and I ask God to give you strength, and to make it possible for you soon to find the peace and security of a *stable home*.

And may you experience God's love in your hearts!