



The Holy See

LETTER OF PAUL VI TO THE ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*To our Venerable Brothers the Archbishops and Bishops
of the United States of America*

During the season of Lent it is your practice to address an appeal to the Catholics of the United States in order to encourage them to contribute generously to the agency which provides aid and assistance for needy people around the world. In view of the immense work of charity that has been accomplished by this agency in the past and continues to be carried out in the present, how could we not associate ourselves with you in this appeal?

We have already addressed a message to the universal Church inviting all Catholics to a spirit of generous sacrifice in this holy season. But the great sufferings of which our times are the sad witness urge us to speak without ceasing and at every possible opportunity on behalf of the so often voiceless afflicted and destitute people of today's world. And indeed, is not constant concern for the alleviation of suffering, wherever it is found, a task incumbent upon our apostolic office? The New Testament provides numerous examples of the Apostles' insistence that the followers of the Lord must be compassionate towards all in need and assist them even materially (Cfr. *2 Cor.* 9, 13; *1 Jo.* 3, 17; *Jac.* 2, 20).

In our recent message, dear brothers, we emphasized that the giving of financial assistance must be based upon motives provided by faith. In this context it is helpful to recall one of the lessons contained in our Lord's answer to the messengers of John the Baptist, when they asked him: "Are you 'He who is to come' or do we look for another?" Jesus said to them: "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them" (*Matth.* 11, 3-5). By these words our Lord taught us that bringing salvation to mankind involves not only man's spirit but his body as well. Imitation of the Lord must always involve concern for both the spiritual and material well-being of mankind.

We know how much your people have done already. The spiritual treasure of grace and salvation

which they have received has overflowed into a great generosity on behalf of the needy. But much still remains to be done. We are confident that your people will continue to be generous, so that suffering everywhere may be alleviated; we are confident that their contributions will always be a sign of their gratitude to the Father for the great love he has shown through the death and Resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ.

Invoking upon all of you the grace of God our Father, the peace of our Savior and the joy of fellowship in the Holy Spirit, we cordially impart to the Church in the United States our special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, March 7, 1973.

PAULUS PP. VI