



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS OF SUFFERING
FROM HONG KONG AND
THE SILENT WORKERS OF THE CROSS**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 31 May 1996*

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is with great joy that I welcome the group of *Volunteers of Suffering* from Hong Kong, and the *Silent workers of the Cross* who are assisting you during your visit to Rome. Your faith and courage in the face of suffering make this meeting a special and significant moment for the Successor of Peter. I encourage you in your self-offering and in your apostolate.

You already know that your sufferings can lead you into the very heart of the Christian mystery. In his Letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul writes: "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (*Col.* 1, 24). What saint Paul is saying is that the crucified and risen Christ is united in a special way with those who suffer, for through the Cross life triumphs over death and grace over sin. He is our Saviour and no one can add to his work of Redemption. But through the mystery of the Church, his body, he draws us into his own sacrifice, so that we discover - in the daily struggle with our limitations - the *saving meaning of suffering*. At that point, interior peace and indeed spiritual joy are possible (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Salvifici Doloris*, 26).

For the Christian, infirmity, disease and other afflictions are not something to which we passively resign ourselves. *Suffering belongs to human transcendence*: it is one of those areas in which men and women, even children, are enabled as it were to go beyond themselves. Accepted and borne in faith, suffering becomes the instrument of our sanctification and the sanctification of others. It becomes a source of redemption for the whole of humanity.

I am certain that the Hong Kong Centre of *Volunteers of Suffering* has a significant role to play in the spiritual life of the Church there, by communicating that mysterious vitality which comes from prayerful union with the crucified Lord and by bearing witness to *the power of the Gospel to transform even very difficult situations*. I encourage the *Silent Workers of the Cross*, including the group of novices here today, to persevere in living and sharing with others the charism which your founder, Monsignor Novarese, left to you.

May Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted, be close to you all.

And as a pledge of strength and peace in the Lord I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

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