



The Holy See

***APPEAL OF POPE PAUL VI
TO THE STUDENTS OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***

Wednesday, 16 February 1972

Dear Children, on this the first day of Lent, as we begin the liturgical season of sacrifice and self-denial in preparation for Easter, we ask each and every one of you to remember millions of needy, homeless and hungry children in other countries around the world. They depend so much for help upon your annual donations to the Catholic Relief Overseas Aid Fund.

Over the years, your offerings have made it possible for the American Bishops' overseas Organization, Catholic Relief Services, to bring food, clothing and medicines to poor children in many countries. For many of these boys and girls, this is their only source of aid.

We are especially alarmed today with the situation in India and Pakistan. Millions of human beings have left their homes in East Pakistan and have gone in search of refuge in India. They have travelled long miles without food. They have arrived in refugee camps weak and sick, owning only what they could carry on their backs or in their arms.

Life in these refugee camps is harsh. There is little to eat. Disease and death are ever present. We fear that as this terrible situation continues, the hardships of the refugees will increase. There are so many hundreds of thousands, that further help must come from around the world. We are most fearful that many children will die from malnutrition.

Your own Catholic Relief Services and its staff have been working in the refugee camps since this crisis began last year. From the United States, your organization has sent vaccine, shelter, food, medicines, and other relief supplies. In India, millions of loaves of bread are being baked to feed young and old alike; clothing has been bought and distributed, as well as tents and medicines. Many of you have already helped to make this aid possible when you answered our appeal in

October for a special day of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Sadly, the suffering continues and there seems to be no early end to the problem. We are asking you, therefore, to continue to show Christian love.

At the same time, we cannot forget the poor of other lands in Asia, in Africa and Latin America. Your Catholic Relief Services is at work in all the deprived areas of the world. It gives the young the basic necessities of life and furnishes them schools for an education. It helps them learn a trade or develop better farms to grow more of their own food. It teaches mothers how to prevent disease and malnutrition in infants.

Your part has been most important in making Catholic Relief Services a vital and effective agency for the Church in her role to help abolish poverty and social injustices. As you begin to make your Lenten sacrifices, you should think of how each little donation may keep some child alive or make his future a better one.

Our Blessed Lord has asked us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, shelter the homeless and give drink to the thirsty. When you help the work of the Catholic Relief Overseas Aid Fund, you are doing God's work. You are showing your love for your neighbor and for Christ himself.

In his name we thank you for your efforts and your generosity. To you and to your parents and brothers and sisters we affectionately impart our special Apostolic Blessing.