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Pope's Lenten Message

Washington (NC) — Here is the English text of Pope John Paul II's 1984 Lenten message, distributed through the Vatican charities agency Cor Unum and released Feb. 28 in Washington by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How many times have we read and listened to the awesome text from chapter 25 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory... he will say... 'Come O blessed of my Father... for I was hungry and you gave me food...'"!



Yes, the redeemer of the world experiences the hungers of all his hungry brothers and sisters. He suffers with those who cannot feed their bodies: all those peoples that are victims of drought or unfavorable economic conditions, all those families affected by unemployment or scarcity of work.

And yet our earth can and must feed all its inhabitants, from the youngest children to the aged, and including all

the categories of those who work.

Christ also suffers with those who rightly hunger for justice and for respect for their human dignity; he suffers with those who are deprived of their fundamental liberties, with those who are neglected or, worse still, exploited in their state of poverty.

Christ suffers with those who yearn for an equitable and universal peace, while this peace is being destroyed or threatened by so many conflicts and by a senseless and excessive build-up of arms. Can we be allowed to forget that the world is meant to be built, not destroyed?

In a word, Christ suffers with all the victims of material, moral and spiritual poverty.

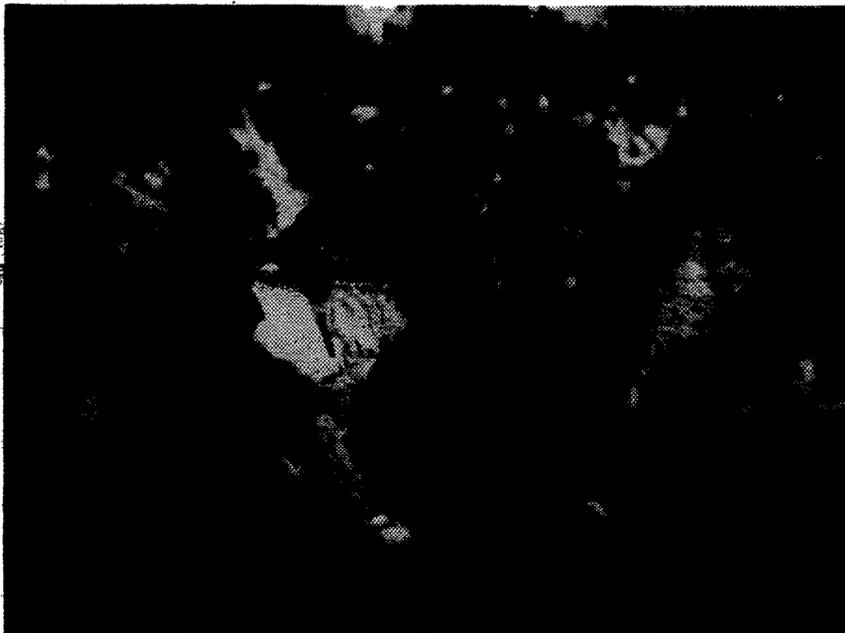
"I was hungry and you gave me food... I was a stranger and you welcomed me... I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Mt. 25:35-36). It is to each one of us that these words will be addressed at the day of judgment. But they already challenge us and judge us.

Giving from our surplus and even from what we need for ourselves is not always a spontaneous reaction of our nature. It is precisely for this reason that we must constantly cast a fraternal glance at our fellow human beings and their lives; it is precisely for this reason that we stimulate within ourselves this hunger and thirst for sharing, for justice and for peace, so that we shall really

undertake deeds that will help to assist individuals and peoples that are hard pressed.

Dear brothers and sisters, at this season of Lent in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption, let us be more deeply converted; let us be more sincerely reconciled with God and with our neighbor. Then this spirit of penance, sharing and fasting will be translated into real action, which your local churches will certainly urge upon you.

"Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." This exhortation of St. Paul to the Corinthians is extremely relevant today (2 Cor. 9:7). May you be enabled to feel the deep joy that comes from sharing food, from giving a welcome to a stranger, from assisting in the human advancement of the poor, from obtaining work for the unemployed, from the honest and courageous exercise of your civic, social and professional responsibilities, from the peace experienced in your homes and in all your relationships with others! All of this reflects the love of God, to which we must be converted. Love inseparable from the so often urgent service of our neighbor. Let us desire, and let us deserve, to hear Christ tell us at the last day that inasmuch as we did good to one of the least of his brethren we did it to him!



Photos by Terrance J. Brennan

Youth Day

More than 900 diocesan youths gathered for Bishop Matthew H. Clark's Day with Youth Sunday at Bishop Kearney High School. Above, members of a guest panel answered various questions from the assembly. From left, Brother Raymond Powers, CSC; Miss Kebby Burnham; Father Joseph Gibino, SJ; John and Pat Young; Father James Schwartz; and Sister Muriel Curran, SSND. Bishop Clark, far right, acted as moderator for the discussion. Story and more photos, Page 5; Bishop Clark's column, Page 3.

6 U.S. Holy Days Okayed by Vatican

Washington (NC) — The Vatican has approved the U.S. bishops' petition to retain six holy days of obligation in the United States.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops said Feb. 27 that it had received the Vatican approval of the request, voted on by the bishops last November and forwarded to the Holy See Dec. 6.

The bishops' petition to the Vatican asked that the U.S. exemption from four holy days of obligation in the church's general calendar be continued, leaving only the six days of obligation observed by U.S. Catholics for more than a century.

The bishops made the request because of the new Code of Canon Law which went into effect last November. The NCCB Committee on Canonical Affairs said the new code, mandating 10 holy days, would supersede the current U.S. practice unless a new edict, or exemption from the general law, was obtained.

Under the new edict, U.S. Catholics will continue to observe six holy days of obligation: the feasts of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), Christmas (Dec. 25), Mary Mother of God (Jan. 1), Ascension (sixth Thursday after Easter), Assumption (Aug. 15), and All Saints (Nov. 1), as well as all Sundays of the year.

As they did in the past, American Catholics will transfer the observance of the Epiphany from Jan. 6 to the first Sunday after Jan. 1 and Corpus Christi from the second Thursday after Pentecost to the second Sunday after Pentecost. They will observe the feasts of St. Joseph (March 19) and Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29) on their respective dates, but without an obligation to attend Mass.

U.S. Senate Votes for Death Penalty

Washington (NC) — The Senate Feb. 22 voted 63-32 to restore the death penalty for such federal crimes as terrorism, assassination or attack on a president, murder on federal property and kidnapping.

The U.S. Catholic Conference termed the action "a deeply troubling sign" and said that "restoring the death penalty would mark a major erosion of our society's respect for the sanctity of human life."

President Reagan, who survived an assassination attempt in 1981, strongly urged passage of the bill. Senators' intentions to approve the bill were signaled shortly before Congress' mid-February recess when the Senate voted to cut off a filibuster against the measure.

The fate of the legislation in the House, however, is uncertain.

In a statement from Msgr. Daniel F. Hoye, general secretary, the USCC said that it would "strongly urge the House of Representatives to reject this legislation."

The bill would bring federal laws on the death penalty into line with Supreme Court standards. The death penalty already has been restored by 38 states.

Msgr. Hoye said the USCC, public policy arm of the U.S. bishops, "stands strongly opposed to any use

of the death penalty in our nation.

Msgr. Hoye added that "the crime and abuse of life that plagues our society and frightens our people" is a serious matter society must address. "However, capital punishment is neither an effective nor a morally accept-

able response to the violence," he said.

"If we are to fashion a society grounded in a consistent ethic of respect for human life, then we must reject the death penalty and find more acceptable and humane ways of dealing with violent crime."

Lenten Regulations

Today, Ash Wednesday, is a day of both fast and abstinence from meat. Good Friday is the only other day of both fast and abstinence.

Other Fridays of Lent are days of abstinence from meat.

The fast is defined as one full meal a day, with two lighter meals. It is required of those 21-59 years of age.

The prohibition against meat on Fridays applies to those 14 years of age and older.

A Catholic should not lightly excuse himself from these practices.

CROSSROADS II



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RENEWED CHURCH

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