

...a time for conversion...

Special Lenten supplement



**'Give
them
something
to eat.'**

(Mt 14:16)

Pope's 1996 message focuses attention on world's hungry

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. Once again the Lord is calling us to follow him along the journey of Lent. Each year all the faithful are invited to respond anew as individuals and as a community to our baptismal vocation and to bear fruits of conversion. Lent is a journey of evolving, creative reflection which inspires penance and gives new impetus to every aspect of our commitment to follow the Gospel. It is a journey of love which opens the hearts of believers to our brothers and sisters and draws them to God. Jesus asks his disciples to live and to radiate charity; this new commandment of love represents the authoritative summation of

the Decalogue entrusted by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Each day we encounter people who are hungry, thirsty or sick, people who are outcasts or migrants. During this season of Lent we are invited to pay greater heed to the suffering written on their faces, faces which challenge us to acknowledge the various aspects of poverty that continue in our time.

2. The Gospel makes it clear that the Redeemer is especially compassionate to those in difficulty. He speaks to them of the Kingdom of God and heals the body and spirit of those who are in need of care. He then says to his disciples, "Give them something to eat."

However the disciples realize that they only have five loaves of bread and two fish. Like the disciples in Bethsaida, we today are aware that the means at our disposal are certainly insufficient to meet the needs of the nearly 800 million people who suffer from hunger and malnutrition, and who still struggle, on the threshold of the year 2000, for survival.

What can we do? Do we leave things as they are, and resign ourselves to being helpless? This is the question that, at the beginning of Lent, I would like to pose to each member of the faithful and to the whole church. The crowds of starving people — children,

Continued on page 4A