



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE SCHOOL CHILDREN
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA***

Wednesday, 23 February 1966

Dear school children of the United States of America,

This is the pope speaking to you from Vatican City. How very wonderful and consoling it is, that, by means of the marvel of radio, your Father in Christ can speak to you across the vast ocean that separates us, on this Ash Wednesday, the first day of the penitential season of Lent.

As you know, We recently visited your beautiful country, to make a plea for peace to representatives of most of the countries of the world, at the headquarters of the United Nations. The memory of that brief visit is still vivid in Our mind and heart. We recall with joy the warm welcome of the happy and healthy children, who lined the streets as We drove through the City of New York. We were deeply moved by the piety and firm faith shown by those children who were among the thousands attending the Holy Mass We offered in Yankee Stadium. We are grateful for the gracious hospitality and affection that met Us on every side. May your land always remain strong and prosperous, and its citizens be motivated by true Christian principles.

But, in other parts of the world, there are children with lined and sorrowful faces looking old before their time, their little bodies racked by disease and wasted by hunger, with no medicine to relieve their pain, no food to satisfy their hunger.

We think especially today, with sadness in Our heart, of the children of Vietnam, innocent victims of war. So many of them have been killed or wounded; so many others, orphaned or separated from their mothers and fathers. They roam the streets, even the dangerous battle areas, lost and confused; not knowing where to go, with no one to help them. They are among the saddest and most needy children in the world today.

All of these are the spiritual children of the Pope, and now, as in past years, We again ask you good American boys and girls to make an extra effort during the holy season of Lent, to help your less fortunate brothers and sisters, living in areas of need throughout the world. You can do this by self-denial, by prayer, and by giving.

Self-denial done in memory of the sufferings of Our Lord, which the Church calls to our minds during Lent, can help strengthen your will, sharpen your mind and form strength of character. It is truly virtuous and good when you deny yourselves in order to help others who are in need.

What you deny yourselves during Lent, you should use to help others by giving, by contributing to the Children's Lenten Collection held in all your schools. Every cent you give is used to support the worldwide aid programs of Catholic Relief Services, the agency formed by your Bishops to help the poor, the sick and the needy in other lands.

Finally, Lent is a time of prayer as well as of penance. So We urge you to pray for those children who suffer cold, hunger and disease, asking God to comfort and sustain them, and to grant them relief and assistance.

To make sacrifices for other children, to pray for those who are not so well off as you are, to give generously to boys and girls like you, who are in need of help-these are also valuable ways of expressing your thanks to God for the many blessings He has showered on you, your families and your beloved country.

We are mindful of your past goodness to poor children of the world, so We are confident that you will be generous to this year's appeal in their name. We call down upon each one of you, your good parents, the priests of your parishes, the Brothers and Sisters of your schools and all your teachers, the richest graces of Our Father in heaven. And We lovingly bestow upon you all Our paternal Apostolic Blessing.