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A Call to Solidarity

Pope John Paul II has called for solidarity with the earthquake victims of the disaster in south and southeast Asia; the Church herself is moving to aid the people afflicted by this catastrophe.

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At the conclusion of his regular Wednesday audience on December 29, John Paul II remembered the victims of the earthquake that struck parts of Asia on December 26 and

called for solidarity with the people affected by the disaster:

"The news coming from Asia shows us ever more the extent of the catastrophe that struck Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India, and Somalia. The international community and many humanitarian organizations have come together quickly to lend help. Numerous charitable institutions of the Church are doing the same.

"In the Christmas spirit of these days, I invite all believers of good will to generously contribute to this great work of solidarity with the peoples subjected to such a harsh trial and exposed to the danger of disease. I am by their side through my prayer and affection, especially those who are injured and homeless, while I entrust the innumerable victims who lost their lives to the divine mercy."

On the afternoon of December 28 the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" published a communique which affirms that the Holy Father "has approved a first installment of aid to the populations of the countries struck by the earthquake and tsunami that violently hit south and southeast Asia, as well as some parts of Africa." The rest of the text follows:

"On behalf of the Holy Father, the dicastery has sent emergency aid to Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Indonesia, and Somalia through the pontifical representatives in those countries.

"In the Church, as in all parts of the world, a unanimous chorus of fraternal solidarity has arisen, with concrete responses to the appeals made by the afflicted populations: The Italian episcopal Conference has contributed 3 and a half million dollars; the Caritas network has

already collected more than 2 million dollars. Some of its branches (Austria, Netherlands, the United States) have sent experts to the region to help the various national branches of Caritas. In addition, the Jesuit Refugee Service is helping the local Churches.

"In the Pope's name, Cor Unum is closely following the unfolding of events and the work of different Church organizations, and now appeals to the faithful to generously support--individually and collectively--the efforts of the respective local Churches and charitable organizations so that a recovery program can begin for the people so harshly affected by this devastating calamity.

"Those who would like to contribute to the Holy Father's efforts with a gesture of solidarity toward our unfortunate Asian brothers and

sisters can do so by making a contribution to bank account 603035, made out to the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, 00120 Vatican City State, Europe, and specifying that it be applied to the Asian emergency."

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