



Isn't this a beautiful picture? It won first prize as best photograph of the year. And who are these people? They are migrants on a beach, searching for a mobile phone link so as to call their loved ones. But looking at this picture with the eyes of the heart, we see men and women yearning for contact with God. Arms lifted like children eager to get to know the world, they are raising small lights toward a bigger Light that already illuminates them.

This is what people do when they are searching for God. They raise their eyes to heaven looking for a "link" from on High, measuring their small flame against the divine Flame. At times they find this link; at other times they don't.

In his Lenten message for 2014, the Pope speaks about *material, moral and spiritual destitution*. *Material destitution* is the poverty of those who lack food, water, hygiene, work and the opportunity to develop and grow culturally. *Moral destitution* consists in slavery to vice, alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, etc. Some people are plunged into this kind of destitution by unjust social conditions or unemployment. *Spiritual destitution* is experienced by those who think they don't need God or who search for him in the wrong way and in the wrong places. It is these last—like the symbolic people in the picture—who are the "poor" to whom the Paulines direct their apostolate. Their mission is not to satisfy the material hunger of the world's population but to satisfy the spiritual destitution of those who hunger for God.

So we can say that the wise realize that the beginning and end of everything is a God who loves, calls and always forgives his children. Only this wisdom (the absence of spiritual destitution) makes a person free.

And only a free person (someone not living in moral destitution) can struggle to make it possible for every human being to live with dignity (that is, without spiritual destitution). The result is that only by combating spiritual destitution—which the Pauline Family does by giving everyone the charity of the truth—will every other form of poverty be resolved. This means that only a victory over spiritual destitution can defeat all the other forms of poverty that oppress our world.

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