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COMUNICATO STAMPA DEL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO COR UNUM: ESERCIZI SPIRITUALI DEI RESPONSABILI DELLE ATTIVITÀ CARITATIVE DELLA CHIESA IN ASIA (6-11 SETTEMBRE 2009, TAIPEI)

COMUNICATO STAMPA DEL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO *COR UNUM*: ESERCIZI SPIRITUALI DEI RESPONSABILI DELLE ATTIVITÀ CARITATIVE DELLA CHIESA IN ASIA (6-11 SETTEMBRE 2009, TAIPEI)

From 6 – 11 September 2009, the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum* held Spiritual Exercises for presidents and directors of the Church's ministry of charity from throughout Asia. There were some 450 participants, including 5 Cardinals and over 60 Bishops, from 29 nations and 260 dioceses. The meeting took place at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei, Taiwan, under the theme of Jesus' words, "*You did it to me ...*" (*Mt 25,40*). His Excellency President Ma Ying-jeou came to welcome the participants.

Pope Benedict XVI dedicated his first major teaching to the theme of charity through the Encyclical *Deus Caritas est* (2005). The Holy Father states that the essential requirement for those who serve in the Church's charitable organizations is to "be persons moved by Christ's love, persons whose hearts Christ has conquered with his love, awakening them with a love of neighbor" (n. 33). This gift of God is the hidden engine that animates charitable activity through the response of faith, enlightened by the Gospel, moving Christians to practice love of neighbor. For this reason, the Pope calls for a "formation of heart" (*Deus Caritas est*, n. 31a) for charity workers, both professional and volunteer, which the Taipei gathering wished to foster through prayer, attentive listening to the Word of God, receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation and celebrating the Holy Eucharist. The fraternal communion lived together by men and women dedicated to combat misery will contribute to experience the deep unity of the Lord's disciples in this vast continent. The participants prayed in a special way for those struck recently by Typhoon Morakot in Taiwan. At the very start of the meeting – Sunday, 6 September – Cardinal Cordes, President of *Cor Unum*, traveled to the worst hit area of Kaohsiung in order to visit personally and bring the Lord's consolation to those affected by the tragedy.

In a Message to the Conference transmitted by the Cardinal Secretary of State, the Holy Father expressed "his warm appreciation and gratitude for all those who commit themselves to the *diakonia* of charity, an essential activity of the life of the Church and a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community." His Holiness assured the participants in Taipei of his prayer and confidence that the Spiritual Exercises will strengthen in them "the virtue of heartfelt compassion for all who suffer."

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