



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
AT THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE IN CAMP HILL****

Canberra (Australia), 24 November 1986

Mr Prime Minister,

Ladies and Gentlemen, 1. You do me great honour with your warm welcome, and I thank you, Mr Hawke and Mr Howard, for your kind and thoughtful words. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure for me to meet with you all. You are, one might say, practitioners of the art of democratic government. Indeed, in greeting you I greet all those who, in bearing responsibility for the laws and their administration and interpretation, promote the well-being and common good of the entire population of this vast country. I wish to renew my gratitude for the invitation extended to me by the Australian Government and to express my deep appreciation for everything that has been done to facilitate my visit. I wish to acknowledge the many achievements of Australia, to know more closely the fabric of her life, and to share more intimately in the hopes of her people. Beginning here in Canberra, I wish to offer everywhere I go a message of encouragement, respect and fraternal love. 2. I am visiting your land as Chief Pastor of the Catholic Church, and I rejoice that harmony, friendship and cooperation have characterized relations between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Holy See both before and after the formalizing of diplomatic relations. I very much appreciate the courtesy of this reception which you accord to me today. I know how much you esteem the principle of religious freedom for all who live in this nation. The number of Catholics in the population and their presence in virtually all areas of Australian life are one example of how this religious freedom – so fundamental among freedoms – is respected here. I pray that you will always guard the right to religious freedom, and be ever vigilant in defending the very foundation of this right and every human right, which is and will for ever be the dignity of the human person. As you know, the principle of the inviolable dignity of all human beings is an ever higher principle in a democratic State than majority opinion. Indeed, all democracies will eventually succeed or fail to the extent that they truly guard and promote the human rights of all, including minorities. 3. Ladies and gentlemen: we speak a common language of respect for the human person – whether that person be close at hand or in some remote corner of the planet – and it is my hope that, with the help of God, our words and deeds can achieve something lasting in the cause of human rights. The challenge is immense: to promote at every level a just society, which in turn will be the basis of true peace; to defend the weak and vulnerable members of society; to eliminate racism and all other discrimination wherever it is found; to protect and assist the family in its needs; to help provide work for the unemployed, especially for heads of households and the young; and to assist all those in need, as they strive to

lead, a fully human life. As pastor of all Catholic Australians I urge them – and indeed I appeal to all people of good will – to cooperate with their Governments, individually and in appropriate organizations, in seeking these goals.⁴ I have been informed that Australia has committed herself through successive Governments to a dual system of education that ideally allows parents freedom of choice as to the type of schooling their children will receive. The Government and non-Government schools of this country endeavour to help each individual child to grow and develop physically, socially and intellectually. This is indeed a great mission. In the field of health care, your tradition again provides for a dual system of Government and non-Government institutions working side by side for the well-being of the total community. In this area too, great service has been rendered to society and much care shown for the people and their needs. For the honour of Australia and the good of humanity, I hope that this service and solicitude will continue and increase, and always respect the inviolable nature of human life. In social welfare your country has consistently striven to help the less fortunate among you: widows, the aged, the unemployed, the infirm. Australia looks after her own people. That is your first obligation and I praise you for the way in which successive Federal and State Governments have fulfilled it.⁵ As a nation you have been generous to the less fortunate ones of this world. The great influx of immigrants after the Second World War met Australia's needs, but it also offered to many who were desperate the chance of a peaceful and prosperous life. Over the years humanitarian motives have prompted you to accept refugees from many countries. This openness to the needs of others has been, is, and always will be worthy of high commendation. I also wish to encourage you in your instinctive readiness to give a "fair go" to whoever is suffering oppression or misfortune. In today's world no country can isolate itself or remain indifferent to the need of others. And so I take the liberty of asking from you, who have received so much from God, something more than a generous response to the crises that afflict other people. Seize the initiative to go out to other people everywhere. You are a very important part of a world that needs to experience reconciliation and solidarity. It needs men and women who are prepared to sacrifice themselves for others rather than sacrifice others for a cause. If my presence among you and my words can help to promote a society in which people always treat each other with genuine respect and love, then I will feel my journey has been of real service.⁶ In accordance with the principles laid down by the framers of your Constitution, the Church claims no special institutional treatment. Nevertheless, she does not cease to insist that justified pluralism is not to be confused with neutrality on human values. Thus it is that the Church's members wish to make use of the opportunity given by the democratic pluralism which so characterizes Australian society to proclaim insistently those values which are bound up with the dignity and rights of every human being without exception. I hope that all Catholics, and all your fellow citizens, will invite you by their voice and by their votes to ensure that nothing is done by the legislature to undermine these values. On the contrary) may these values become ever more tightly woven into the fabric of the law that shapes Australian society. My hope is that all your political activity will help promote a civilization characterized by sharing, solidarity and fraternal love – the only civilization worthy of man. The only strong bases for this civilization are reverence for human life from the moment of conception and throughout every stage of its earthly pilgrimage, respect for all fundamental rights of the human person, and true justice and equity in concern for the common good.⁷ In view of the world situation, and knowing your own political and diplomatic efforts, I would like to add some words on a subject of vital concern to all the peoples of the world: the urgent need for appropriate disarmament and world peace. I know that Australia has shown special interest in this regard, naming an ad hoc Ambassador for this purpose. At the beginning of this year, the International Year of Peace proclaimed by the United Nations Organization, I renewed my commitment and that of the whole Catholic Church to the cause of peace expressed in this way: "Peace as a value with no frontiers; North-South, East-West, everywhere one people united in only one Peace". Permit me to emphasize two areas of action that are particularly

effective in contributing to peace: the defence of human rights and efforts for the development of peoples. These areas touch the very foundation of peace. As long as these elements are missing at any level, peace is imperfect and world peace is imperilled. Everything that protects human rights, everything that promotes human dignity through integral development, leads to peace. Ladies and gentlemen: as servants and leaders of democracy, you are in a splendid position to contribute to the lofty cause of world peace. Yes, dear friends, you are indeed able to exert great influence for the good of humanity. The well-being of this nation, and, to some extent, of all nations, depends on the conscious effort of each person here. Go forward together. With God's help you can fulfil his will for you and make – each of you – your own special contribution to the peace of world. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

And where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal

life.

*AAS 79 (1987), p. 942-946. *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. IX, 2 pp. 1604-1608. *L'Osservatore Romano* (Supplemento) 25.11.1986 p. XX. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 48 pp. 13, 14 © Copyright 1986 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana