



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO H.E. MRS ANNE MAREE PLUNKETT
NEW AMBASSADOR OF AUSTRALIA TO THE HOLY SEE***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 18 May 2006*

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to extend a cordial welcome to you today as I accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Australia to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings which you bear from the Governor-General, Government, and people of Australia. Please convey to them my heartfelt appreciation and assure them of my prayers for the well-being of the nation.

The steadfast resolve of the Holy See to promote the cause of peace stands at the heart of her diplomatic activity. With firm conviction and in a spirit of service she reminds all people that if peace is to be authentic and lasting it must be built on the bedrock of the truth about God and about man. Consequently, the irrepressible yearning for peace present in the heart of every person – regardless of particular cultural identity – can be satisfied only if it is understood as the fruit of an order planned and willed by the love of God, planted in human society by its divine Founder, and respected by humanity in its thirst for ever more perfect justice (cf. [*Message for the 2006 World Day of Peace*](#), 3).

Your Excellency, you have rightly indicated that practical commitment to ensuring the rule of justice and promoting peace is a widely recognized trait of your people. Tangible expression of this is found in their leadership of peace-keeping operations, generous assistance with aid projects, and readiness to contribute to the requirements of international stability and security necessary for social and economic advancement across the globe. Australia's missions in Solomon Islands, East Timor and Afghanistan are highly respected by the international community and bear noble

witness to the truth that all people are members of one and the same human family, receiving their essential and common dignity from God and capable of transcending every social and cultural limitation (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 38).

The laudable resolve to work for peace on an international scale must be matched with an equal determination to attain justice at the local level. I know that your Government has assiduously addressed concerns regarding the reception of refugees, in order to ensure that humanitarian considerations are incorporated within immigration detention policy and duly monitored. In regard to the Aboriginal people of your land, there is still much to be achieved. Their social situation is cause for much pain. I encourage you and the Government to continue to address with compassion and determination the deep underlying causes of their plight. Commitment to truth opens the way to lasting reconciliation through the healing process of asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness - two indispensable elements for peace. In this way our memory is purified, our hearts are made serene, and our future is filled with a well-founded hope in the peace which springs from truth (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 9 January 2006).

Your Excellency, as I welcome you to the Vatican my thoughts turn with joy to the visit I shall make, God willing, to Sydney for World Youth Day 2008. In this regard, I wish to thank the people of Australia, and particularly the Prime Minister and Government, for the enthusiasm with which they have embraced this visit and for the practical assistance already being given to its organization.

More than an event, *World Youth Day* is a time of deep ecclesial renewal, especially among the young, the fruits of which will benefit the whole of your society. In countries such as yours, where the disquieting process of secularization is much advanced, many young people are themselves coming to realize that it is the transcendent order that steers all life along the path of authentic freedom and happiness. Against the tide of moral relativism which, by recognizing nothing as definitive, traps people within a futile and insatiable bid for novelty, the young generation is rediscovering the satisfying quest for goodness and truth. In so doing they look to both Church and civil leaders to dispel any eclipse of the sense of God and to allow the light of truth to shine forth, giving purpose to all life and making joy and contentment possible for everyone.

It is this same respect for transcendent order that has led Australians to recognize the fundamental importance of marriage and stable domestic life at the heart of society, and to expect that political and social forces - including the media and entertainment industries - recognize, support and protect the irreplaceable value of families. They appreciate that pseudo-forms of 'marriage' distort the Creator's design and undermine the truth of our human nature, confusing a false sense of freedom with the true freedom of choosing the definitive gift of the permanent "yes" which spouses promise to each other. I therefore encourage the people of Australia to continue to take up the challenge of forging a pattern of life, both individually and as a community, in harmony

with God's loving plan for all humanity.

For her part the Catholic Church in Australia continues to support marriage and family life, and to uphold the Christian foundations of civic life. She is much involved in the spiritual and intellectual formation of the young, especially through her schools. Additionally her charitable apostolate extends to immigrant communities and those living on the margins of society and, through her mission of service, she will respond generously to new social challenges as they arise.

Your Excellency, I am sure that your appointment will further strengthen the bonds of friendship which already exist between Australia and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities you will find that the various offices of the Roman Curia are most ready to assist you in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you, your family and your fellow citizens, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

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