



# The Holy See

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PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
AT THE AIRPORT***

*Fairbairn (Australia), 24 November 1986*

*Your Excellency the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia,  
Mr Prime Minister,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. It is with great gratitude and joy that I set foot on Australian soil: gratitude to God who has enabled me to make this visit, and joy at the thought that I am among friends. I thank you, Your Excellency, for your kind words of welcome on behalf of the people of Australia, and I thank you and the Prime Minister, as well as many other distinguished Australian citizens, for inviting me to come. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Australian bishops for their invitation, and to the Catholic community for its generous endorsement of the official invitations. My gratitude extends, in fact, to all the citizens of this country.

I come to Australia in the footsteps of my predecessor Paul VI, who was the first Pope in history to visit Australia. For me personally it is the second time. My first visit to your beautiful country took place in 1973 on the occasion of the International Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne. At that time I was able to come here to Canberra, where I met the Prime Minister and other leading members of Parliament. I also visited the War Memorial and the Australian National University. I still have warm memories of that visit, which was followed by brief visits to the State capitals as well as to Geelong and Queanbeyan.

2. On this occasion, however, I come as a pilgrim, as one who journeys as an act of religious devotion. I come here as Pastor of the Catholic people, to celebrate the Eucharist with them, to strengthen them in their faith, to confirm their hope and to invite them to an ever more generous love of God our Father and of men and women everywhere. I come as a fellow Christian to all who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, and confess that he is the Son of God and the "one Mediator

between God and mankind". I look forward to praying with my fellow Christians, listening with them to the word of God in the Scriptures, and encouraging them in fidelity to the faith we share.

To all Australians, people of undoubted good will, I come as a friend: to urge you to pursue in your lives all those values worthy of the human person; to encourage you to be open-hearted, generous to the unfortunate and caring towards those who are pushed to the margins of life. In the words of Saint Paul, may "the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race".

3. All the invitations and the letters I have received from Australians tell me that you look to the Pope to remind you of things that your hearts may be saying to you, but which are often drowned out by the hurly-burly of everyday life. I shall try to respond to your hopes and expectations, so that together during these days we can direct our hearts to God and in him find the full explanation of our human dignity.

The message that I bring and offer to all those who would freely listen to my voice is not mine. It is the message of Jesus Christ. Many of you follow him in discipleship and still others of you revere his teachings. But whether or not you profess faith in Jesus Christ, or talk about this faith with the language that I use, I ask you to consider the profound truths of the Fatherhood of God and the unity of all men and women as children of God. I ask you to reflect on what the world could be if people everywhere acknowledged these truths and lived their lives in accordance with them.

We were made – all of us – for life and for love. We need mutual encouragement and support. In the loving providence of God our Father, the world is meant to provide a home for the whole human family; there is room for everyone to live and there can be sustenance for all. And everyone has the right to pursue his or her destiny with dignity, and to share in the good things that God has made available to his children.

If these thoughts strike a chord within you, then lift up your hearts and ponder the mystery of God and the mystery of humanity. From quiet meditation and the peaceful exchange of reflections, you will discover or rediscover your personal relationship to God and to each other, and find out just how effective you can be in building a society worthy of your children and your children's children.

4. Dear friends: I greet you all with respect, esteem and love. I wish it were possible to speak to each of you, to shake everyone's hand, to bless every child, to embrace each person who is ill or infirm. I do, however, offer personally to every one of you the tender wishes of my heart, and I pray that we may be held gently together in the strong arms of the God and Father of us all.

Everywhere you turn, there is a challenge for you to show your faith in God, a challenge to show your love and concern for all who share with you the gift of human life and bear its burdens. From this land of yours, so blessed by God, you must lift up your eyes and see again and again the

needs of people everywhere. As Australians you have a very special calling to be mindful of all the dimensions of world justice and all the requirements of universal human solidarity.

Dear people of Australia: I have come here to your land to bear witness also to the greatness of your mission and to your immense capacity for good. In this sense too, with generous and uplifted hearts: Advance Australia Fair!

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