



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE DURING THE VISIT
AT THE SIDNEY CRICKET GROUND**

Sidney (Australia), 25 November 1986

Dear Young People of Australia,

1. I am grateful for your welcome and I am very pleased to be here with you this evening. As we come together, we know that the Lord Jesus is with us.

In your song you have raised your voices and your hearts to him, telling him: "We are gathering to celebrate your word, O Lord". Indeed, you have come together here to celebrate his word – his word of peace. This evening, through his Gospel, Jesus has revealed himself to you. Like the disciples you rejoice in his presence; you rejoice when you hear him saying: "Peace be with you".

It is the peace of his Resurrection that Jesus Christ communicates to you and brings into our lives. It is the peace of victory – the victory over sin. It is the peace of reassurance – the reassurance of eternal life. It is the peace of faith in Jesus, the peace that comes from accepting him as the Word of life, as the eternal Son of God who in the mystery of the Incarnation, by becoming the Son of Mary, became the brother of us all. It is the peace of humanity renewed and made strong by contact and communion with the living Jesus – the Jesus who is "the firstborn from the dead"; the Jesus who continues to live in his Church; the Jesus who wishes to unleash in the world the power of his peace, and who wishes to do so through you young people.

And so Jesus repeats to you tonight those everlasting words: "Peace be with you". With all the love of his heart, Jesus wants his peace to become your peace. At the same time he continues to speak to you as he spoke to his Apostles: "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you".

2. Tonight, in fact, you are being sent by Jesus into the world as peacemakers; you are being

commissioned to communicate his peace and its power everywhere you go.

But this means that you yourselves must be filled with this peace of Jesus; you must receive it into your hearts. You must seek it at its source, which is the person of Jesus. And because your commission, your calling and your task are not static but dynamic, you must search for this peace continually. You must embrace it in the word of Jesus, which is the revelation of God.

Yes, dear young people, you must be totally convinced that in order to have that full and perfect peace which Christ offers, you must find it in Christ. For this reason the Church says to you today:

– If you want peace, open your hearts to Christ.

– If you want peace, accept Christ; accept him as the Son of God; accept him also in the mystery of his humanity; accept him in others.

Embrace Christ in everyone who shares with you the dignity of human nature. Reach out to him and discover him in the poor and lonely, the sick and troubled, the disabled, the aged, the unwanted, all those who are waiting for you smile, who need your help, and who crave your understanding, your compassion and your love. And when you have acknowledged and embraced Jesus in all those people, then – and only then – will you share deeply in the peace of his Sacred Heart.

The more you discover the fascination of the peace of Christ, and try to pursue it with the help of God and through the discipline and effort it requires, the better you will be able to be apostles to other young people in Australia and beyond. Your effectiveness as peacemakers will be in direct proportion to the degree in which you accept Christ's peace into your own hearts.

3. Peace has its human dimensions and human demands. What does this mean in practice? How can peace become the reality of our lives, the reality of our world? I have spoken many times of the practical dimensions of peace, of what we must do to preserve and develop God's gift of peace – the peace that Jesus is so willing to share with us. It has often been repeated:

– If you want peace, work for justice.

– If you want peace, defend life.

– If you want peace, proclaim truth.

– If you want peace, " always treat others as you would like them to treat you".

In a word:

– If you want peace, you must love: "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... You must love your neighbour as yourself

".

All this involves personal effort and discipline. It involves accepting ourselves and others as creatures of God, as children of God, as human beings dependent for our happiness on God's law, which is his plan for our lives.

4. In unity among yourselves you will find strength, and in unity you will reach peace – the peace of Christ.

This unity is a reality here tonight – a great reality. It is unity in diversity. And this diversity is authentically Australian; it is authentically Catholic. You represent many different groups with different specific aims, but you are one in the name of Jesus, one in the peace of Jesus. You are one in the ideal of Christian service, one in pursuing justice, one in proclaiming the truth of the equal human dignity of all human beings.

You have come from different ethnic groups, and the very fact that you have gathered here shows that you intend to reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination based on race, origin, colour, culture, sex or religion. You are open – and open you must be – to the great cultural diversity which enhances your unity as Australians and manifests your Catholicity.

Your membership in varied Church groups and movements also shows that you have grasped the important principle of diversity as applied to the one apostolate of the Church. Within the sacred unity of the Church, there are many different ways of serving the Lord. There is "one and the same Spirit who distributes different gifts to different people, just as he chooses", one Spirit who inspires all to work in unison for the one aim of building up the Body of Christ and of spreading his peace.

5. Dear young people: you are not alone! Through the groups to which you belong and with the help of friends, you must continue to weave the great fabric of Christian unity, collaborating with other Christian brothers and sisters, and being open in brotherhood and love also to all men and women of good will.

No, young people of Australia, like Jesus you will never be alone! Speaking about his Father, Jesus declared: "He who sent me is with me, and has not left me to myself". And he wants you to find his companionship and the companionship of his Father and the Holy Spirit in the Church. And this is precisely what you are doing.

Only in shared companionship with the Lord will you be able to communicate peace to the world.

Realize too that the parish, despite all its human limitations, is, after your family, your base in the pursuit and spread of peace. Your journey will often take you elsewhere, but the parish is meant to be, as I said on another occasion: "a fraternal and welcoming family home, where those who have

been baptized and confirmed are aware of forming the People of God. In that home, the bread of good doctrine and the Eucharistic Bread are broken for them in abundance, in the setting of one act of worship".

6. As young people following the example of Christ and trying to live up to the vocation of being peacemakers, you are faced with great challenges every day of your lives. These challenges are part of ordinary living: at home, at school, at work, in Church, in the many and varied activities that make up your lives; in health and sickness; in good times and bad, when problems weigh you down; at moments of anxiety, concern and hope.

At every turn of your life, you are asked to overcome any tendency to selfishness, to reach out to others with open hearts and open minds, in dialogue, not rivalry, with sincere respect and love of every brother and sister. This openness to others in understanding patience, compassion, and in the desire to help promote their good, is an expression of fraternal love. It is a fine example of peacemaking.

At the same time openness to others does not mean that every opinion has equal value: no matter how strong it is, sincerity of conviction cannot turn injustice into justice or falsehood into truth. The truth is not always the easiest or the most comfortable way. The truth is not always the same as the majority opinion, especially if that opinion has been artificially induced by powerful and clever forces of manipulation. But the truth will always be the way to real freedom. Jesus himself tells us: "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free". Both truth and freedom, dear young people, together with justice and love, are the basis of your peace – the peace of Christ received into your hearts and into the world.

7. There is yet another thought that I would like to leave with you. I would like to speak to you about the importance of prayer, because prayer is so closely linked to peace, and peace depends so much on prayer. Permit me to repeat to you what I told the young people of England and Wales a few years ago: "In prayer, united with Jesus – your brother, your friend, your Saviour, your God – you begin to breathe a new atmosphere. You form new goals and new ideals... In Jesus, whom you get to know in prayer, your dreams for justice and your dreams for peace become more definite and look for practical applications... Through contact with Jesus in prayer, you gain a sense of mission that nothing can dull... In union with Jesus in prayer, you will discover more fully the needs of your brothers and sisters. You will appreciate more keenly the pain and suffering that burden the hearts of countless people. Through prayer, especially to Jesus at Communion, you will understand so many things about the world and its relationship to him, and you will be in a position to read accurately what are referred to as the 'signs of the times'. Above all you will have something to offer those who come to you in need. Through prayer you will possess Christ and be able to communicate him to others. And this is the greatest contribution you can make in your lives: to communicate Christ to the world".

And as you communicate Christ to the world, you will communicate the gift of his peace. A dynamic event is taking place in your own lives. Christ is continually speaking these words to you: "Peace be with you!". And he sends you out on mission as he sent the Apostles: "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you".

8. Dear young people: the Risen Christ is offering his peace to the whole world, and he wants to make you his instruments of peace. You are called to combat chaos and confusion with order – the order of your own lives directed to God and in proper relationship to your fellow human beings. Yours is the task of preserving the beauty of nature and the dignity of all God's creation, so that it may all serve humanity and glorify the Creator in accordance with his plan.

The triumph of justice in the world depends so much on you, and it means that the destruction of injustice must begin with the purification of your own hearts.

You are called to confront the errors of the world and every vestige of deceit with the power of truth. For all of us Christians, like Saint Paul, it is a question of living the truth in love and of growing up to the maturity of Christ.

In the face of rivalry you must offer to the world the image of respectful dialogue. Your answer to insult and injury is pardon. The only acceptable position in the face of alienation is to promote reconciliation and to offer fraternal solidarity. Yours is the gigantic task of overcoming all evil with good, always trying amidst the problems of life to place your trust in God, knowing that his grace supplies strength to human weakness. You must oppose every form of hatred with the invincible power of Christ's love.

This is what it means to be young peacemakers, to help build peace, the Kingdom of Christ's peace. This is what you are called to do, and in this mission of yours you will be sustained by the intercession of Mary the Mother of God, and by all the angels and saints. But to be effective, you must accept this mission and its conditions freely, and you must personally say yes to Christ in prayer. With Christ you must all stand together.

Dear young people of Australia: with Christ and each other, you are not alone!

