



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC PILGRIMAGE
OF HIS HOLINESS OF PAUL VI
TO WEST ASIA, OCEANIA AND AUSTRALIA

MASS AT THE HIPPODROME «RANDWICK»

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI

*Australia, Sydney
Thursday, 1 December 1970*

Beloved Sons and Daughters,

Two centuries ago Captain James Cook cast anchor in Botany Bay, close to what is now Sydney. He was the first English navigator to explore the east coast of your continent. That is the event which your nation is celebrating this year, and We have wished on the occasion of this journey to associate Ourselves with your prayer of thanksgiving.

Australia was already inhabited at that time, and We are pleased to greet the representatives of those inhabitants, and to express the wish that, in the midst of the great convergence of peoples witnessed by you, all may ever find the means of safeguarding their human values and may succeed in integrating themselves ever more fully in the nation.

But this celebration makes Us realize how young this country is for the majority of you. Are you perhaps for that reason people who entertain no cult of the past? Perhaps your pride in having built a prosperous Australia is enough for you? Your characteristic dynamism, which manifests itself both in the great buildings that spring up here and in this great city's animation, makes you turn your eyes rather to the future; and that future, to judge by the normal course of things, is a very hopeful one.

Nevertheless, if we meditate on the event we are commemorating, the starting point of Australia's complete transformation, we can receive some enlightenment for our historical, civic, moral and religious awareness.

1. *Every man, as well as every society, has a history.* You are representatives here of an original people, the result of the

meeting of men of very different nations, languages and civilizations. You know well that your vitality, your zest for work and your spirit of enterprise are the living heritage left to you by the pioneering spirit of your forefathers. That is why we cannot consider history as a blind process of chance happenings. God is the Master of history. Jesus Christ, «the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever» (*Hebr.* 13: 8) «the focal point of the longings of history and of civilization» (*Gaudium et spes*, 45), out of love for man arranges the movements of history for the progress of mankind and with a view to «the new heavens and new earth», where justice will be complete (Cfr. *2 Petr.* 3: 13 and *Apoc.* 21: 1).

2. In its turn, is not the *civic spirit* which is so noticeable in your country rooted in your past? Was it not each man's deeply felt awareness that he was sharing in the building of a new land that stirred up in your fathers and in yourselves respect for democratic freedoms? In your country, each citizen, in spite of differences of duties and personal reactions, is aware of a common good that goes beyond himself. He accepts it and works for it. Continue along that line. Do not close your limited circle for the sake of a selfish satisfaction. Live the words of Saint Peter: «You are slaves of no one except God, so behave like free men, and never use your freedom as an excuse for wickedness» (*Petr.* 2: 16.).

3. *Your moral and religious spirit* stands at the summit. The temptation to be satisfied when material needs are fulfilled is one that confronts societies that reach your standard of living. There is the danger of reducing everything to an earthly humanism, to forget life's moral and spiritual dimension, and to stop caring about man's necessary relationship with the Creator of all his goods and the supreme Legislator on their use. Then what emptiness there is in the human heart! What a temptation there is to fill its place with counterfeits, some of which, such as self-centredness, hedonism, eroticism and many others, lead in the end to contempt for man, and do not, for all that, satisfy his profound restlessness. Man's heart is made for God, and there is no full humanism but in his service (Cfr. *Populorum progressio*, 42).

We call on all who bear responsibility in your nation, at all levels and in all fields, to take advantage of this occasion for an examination of conscience. Parents, teachers, those engaged in the communications media, legislators, men in public life-it is not enough to bring people to personal success; their minds and hearts must be opened to their social and religious duties. Each man is today more than ever answerable for all mankind. Do not the satisfaction of religious aspirations and a life lived in accord with the Gospel offer the surest guarantee your wonderful nation and the world can have of a society of brothers through the discovery of having a common Father in God?
May God bless the great Australian nation. May he grant it peace and prosperity.