



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES
OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA***

Brisbane (Australia), 25 November 1986

*Dear Friends,*1. It is with great pleasure that I have looked forward to this meeting with representatives of the communications media. I welcome you, and I offer you a warm fraternal greeting not only on my own behalf, but also on behalf of those who have made the long journey with me from Rome to these distant but very hospitable southern lands. Some of you are old friends whom I see frequently in Rome and who have accompanied me on my Pastoral Visits throughout the world. Others are new friends from communications organizations in Australasia. Your presence here is much appreciated. So too is the attention which your organizations have given to this visit, which has as its first aim to proclaim Jesus Christ's perennial message of reconciliation, peace and unity among all God's children.2. As you know, the Catholic Church realizes very clearly the importance of the communications media. This has been demonstrated in one of the Decrees of the Second Vatican Council and by many practical measures taken by the Church in Rome and throughout the world. Not only must the Church use the communications media to proclaim the Gospel, but the Church also has the responsibility to join with others in affirming certain principles to be observed by communications proprietors and professionals for the moral and even physical well-being of society. The Second Vatican Council's Decree affirms the existence within human society of "a right to information about affairs which affect people individually or collectively". Thus, you have a central role in ensuring, on the one hand, that the community is not denied this right to information and, on the other, that the communication of information conforms fully with moral principles, especially those of truth, charity and justice.3. Technical advances within the last quarter century have further increased the capacity of the communications media to influence events through the opinions and actions of vast numbers of people. Therefore, great power rests in the hands of those who own, control or work within the mass media. If they have a profound understanding of and respect for the dignity and rights of every individual human being as a child of God, then their use of that power can help bring peace to a world which greatly needs it. If they lack this concern for the rights and dignity of every individual, then this power can be used to deceive, to oppress and to divide.4. My message to you today is a paraphrase of Pope Saint Leo the Great's challenge to Christians. I say to you: "Communications specialists: realize your dignity". Realize the opportunity you have not only to report on evil but to help eliminate it. Realize the responsibility you have not only to report on suffering, but to help alleviate it. Realize the challenge you have not only to report good deeds

but to encourage them. Realize your dignity: to be the world's witnesses at events which can influence its destiny; to be the lens through which others focus on reality; to be the lamp which casts light not only into the dark corners of human life but also on to the pathway of the human pilgrimage, to give guidance, direction and reassurance to those who seek to walk securely in the company of their brothers and sisters towards union with God.⁵ Many of you - perhaps most of you - have already done these things, and I commend you on behalf of a grateful world. All of us, however, can become discouraged; all of us can lose perspective as we focus on a deadline near at hand and forget the significance, the importance, the lasting impact of every word we write or speak and of every image we transmit. How precious each one of you is to God! How important is your work as you share with him the task of communicating truth and love to the world! You have my admiration; you have my gratitude; you have my prayers. And I sincerely ask not only that you report about my visit but also that you pray for me in what is really our mutual work of communicating truth. In just a few days I shall be returning to Rome, but the happy memories of this Pastoral Visit, like those of my first visit nearly fourteen years ago, will remain with me. The beautiful lands and the wonderful people of the South Pacific will also remain in my prayers, as will all of you and your loved ones, on whom I now gratefully invoke the blessings of the Lord. © Copyright 1986 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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