



The Holy See

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

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES**

*Sydney, Australia
Wednesday, 2 December 1970*

Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is with great joy that We join you on this happy and significant occasion. We are grateful to you, Bishop Garnsey, to the Australian Council of Churches, to the Catholic national commission on ecumenism and to all who have worked to arrange this service of prayer.

We who gather here share a faith in the same God and his Son Jesus Christ. We come together in his Name, and has he not promised that he will be in our midst? (Cfr. *Matth.* 18: 19)

Jesus died «to gather together in unity the scattered children of God» (*Io.* 11: 52). And because unity is not yet realized fully among us, we want to associate ourselves in a special way this evening with the prayer Our Lord made for his followers, «May they all be one, Father . . . so that the world may believe . . .» (*Io.* 17: 21).

You know well how the Second Vatican Council awakened in the Catholic Church a new awareness of the bonds already existing between Christians who share the riches of Christ through faith and baptism. Many of you who do not belong to the visible fellowship of the Roman Catholic Church also found new encouragement in that ecumenical zeal generated by the Council.

But in these days it is clear that ecumenical work is a continuing and costly task. It demands honest facing of the fact «that in content, development and expression of faith . . . there exist certain differences» (Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, 18 September 1970, *Reflections and Suggestions concerning Ecumenical Dialogue* IV, 2(b)), that doctrinal indifferentism is to be rejected (*Ibid.*, IV, 2(a)), and at the same time that «confessional triumphalism or the appearance of it» (*Ibid.*, IV, 6) must be avoided. History cannot be written off overnight, and the honest hesitations of sensitive consciences always demand our respect and understanding. There is no easy way. The reconciling work of our Lord was achieved through suffering and the Cross. The unity which the ecumenical movement strives to serve has to be bought at a similar price.

Because bonds of unity exist between Christians, it is possible to act together as well as to speak together. Through such efforts undertaken by Christians the world is better able to see the countenance of him «who emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave» (*Phil.*, 2: 7). This is our common calling, to glorify the Father through his Son, by bringing to the world evidence of the redeeming love with which God has enfolded the world from the beginning.

We rejoice to be with you, dear brothers, on this occasion when you have gathered to renew your intention of continuing on the ecumenical way, «to seek in order to find, to find in order to seek still further» (S. AUG., *De Trinitate*, XV: 2; *PL* 42: 1057). May God bless us all and lead us «to a deeper realization and clearer expression of the unfathomable riches of Christ» (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 11).