



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO THE PHILIPPINES,
PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AUSTRALIA AND SRI LANKA

WELCOMING CEREMONY

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

Kingsford-Smith Airport of Sydney (Australia)
Wednesday, 18 January 1995

*Your Excellency the Governor-General,
Mr Prime Minister,
Your Eminence,
My Brother Bishops,
Dear Australian Friends,*

1. With great joy and esteem I greet all of you, deeply grateful to God who has enabled me to visit once again this beloved land of Australia. I thank you, Your Excellency, for coming here personally to welcome me. My gratitude to you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your kind words on behalf of the Government and people. I warmly greet everyone here and everyone listening to my voice on radio or television.

To dear Cardinal Clancy and to my Brother Bishops I renew the expression of my fraternal affection in the Lord. I am very happy to be able to celebrate once more with the Catholic community of Australia the mysteries of our faith and the hope of salvation that unites us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I am truly glad that the *first beatification of an Australian citizen, an Australian woman*, can take place right here in *Mother Mary MacKillop's* own beloved land.

2. Although my visit this time will be brief, I am certain that it will be an intense experience of prayer, dialogue and shared joy, as was my previous visit in 1986. At that time I was able to travel

to every State and Territory in Australia. I remember the vastness of the land, its majestic features and natural beauty, your modern cities, the rich variety of your people and the impressive signs of their energy and enterprise. From the original inhabitants to the most recent immigrants, in the young and the old, among parents with their families, I was privileged to discover the most precious of your national treasures: the Australian people themselves, with all their creativity and determination.

3. The abundant fruits which this heritage can produce when illuminated by a deep faith in God are evident in the example of *an outstanding Australian woman: Mother Mary MacKillop*. Mary MacKillop embodied all that is best in your nation and in its people: genuine openness to others, hospitality to strangers, generosity to the needy, justice to those unfairly treated, perseverance in the face of adversity, kindness and support to the suffering. I pray that her example will inspire many Australians to take new pride in their Christian heritage and to work for a better society for all. This they will do by acting with courage and commitment wherever there is poverty or injustice, wherever innocent life is threatened or human dignity degraded.

4. In the years since my last visit much has changed in the world, and much has changed in Australia. On the international level, the fall of totalitarianism based on ideology, and the lessening of political and military tensions between blocs, are undoubtedly the most striking events. Yet, the benefits which could be expected from such enormous transformations have not always been forthcoming, and new sources of tension and conflict have appeared. Like many other developed countries, Australia too has faced economic and social challenges, to which it is responding. But many people, especially the poor and disadvantaged, still need society's help.

There exists a cultural and spiritual crisis which leaves many, especially young people, confused regarding the meaning of their lives and the values which would give sense and direction to their efforts. At the very heart of modern culture there is *a growing sense of the need for a moral and spiritual renewal*: the need for a new attitude, one in which people will have more importance than *things*, and *human dignity* will take precedence over *material gain*.

5. Dear Australian friends, *your own Mary MacKillop offers a key to such a renewal*. She was a woman of courage who placed the spiritual and material well-being of others ahead of any personal ambition or convenience. The honour which the Church will give to Mother Mary MacKillop by declaring her among the Blessed is in a sense an honour given to Australia and its people. It is also an invitation, an invitation to the whole of society to show genuine love and concern for all who are weighed down by life's burdens. I dare to say that your response will greatly determine the kind of society you will pass on to future generations in this land of great promise.

And now allow me to direct my thoughts and prayers to Japan, to the many victims of yesterday's earthquake. Let us pray for them and may God give strength and courage to all affected and to all

involved in the rescue work. Thank you.

Thank you all once again for your welcome.

God bless the beloved people of Australia!

God bless this fair land!

Thank you very much.