



The Holy See

INAUGURATION OF THE DOMUS AUSTRALIA, THE AUSTRALIAN PILGRIMAGE CENTER IN ROME

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

Domus Australia, Rome
Wednesday, 19 October 2011

Your Eminence,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you for these celebrations to mark the opening of the *Domus Australia*, the Australian Pilgrimage Centre in Rome. On this occasion, I recall with particular gratitude the warmth of the hospitality that was extended to me when I visited your country for [World Youth Day in 2008](#), and now I have the opportunity to reciprocate by welcoming all of you to Rome.

I thank Cardinal Pell for inviting me to join you this evening, and for his kind words. I also thank Saint Mary's Cathedral Choir for their praise of God in song. In addition to greeting my brother Bishops, here for their *Ad Limina* visit, I would like to greet His Excellency Timothy Fischer, Australian Ambassador to the Holy See, and the other Ambassadors present. I am pleased to salute the Rector of the *Domus*, Father Anthony Denton, and Mr Gabriel Griffa and his staff. I am also happy to greet all the people of Australia and to acknowledge the support and assistance of so many of them for this project which, along with your new Embassy, has brought a little corner of Australia to the ancient city of Rome. May the *Domus* now be blessed by the passage of many pilgrims!

Almost exactly one year ago, the first Australian saint, Mary MacKillop, was raised to the altars, and I join all of you in giving thanks to God for the many blessings he has already poured out upon the Church in your land through her example. I pray that Saint Mary will continue to inspire many Australians to follow in her footsteps by living lives of holiness, in the service of God and neighbour.

The Lord sent his Apostles out into the whole world, to proclaim the Gospel to all creation (cf. *Mk* 16:15). This evening's event speaks eloquently of the fruits of the Church's missionary endeavours, by which the Gospel has spread to the very furthest regions of the world, has taken root there and has given birth to a living and thriving Christian community. Like all Christian communities, the Church in Australia is conscious of being on a journey whose ultimate destination lies beyond this world: as Saint Paul expressed it, "our commonwealth is in heaven" (*Phil* 3:20). Our earthly lives are spent journeying towards that ultimate goal, where "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (*1 Cor* 2:9). Here on earth, the Church's long tradition of pilgrimage to holy places serves to remind us that we are heavenward bound, it refocuses our minds on the call to holiness, it draws us ever closer to the Lord and strengthens us with spiritual food for the journey.

Many generations of pilgrims have made their way to Rome from all over the Christian world, in order to venerate the tombs of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and thereby to deepen their communion in the one Church of Christ, founded on the Apostles. In so doing, they strengthen the roots of their faith; and roots, as we know, are the source of life-giving sustenance. In that sense, pilgrims to Rome should always feel at home here, and the *Domus Australia* will play an important part in creating a home for Australian pilgrims in the city of the Apostles. Yet roots are only a part of the story. According to a saying attributed to a great poet from my own country, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, there are two things that children should receive from their parents: roots and wings. From our holy Mother, the Church, we too receive both roots and wings: the faith of the Apostles, handed down from generation to generation, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, conveyed above all through the sacraments of the Church. Pilgrims to this city return to their homelands renewed and strengthened in their faith, and borne aloft by the Holy Spirit in the journey onward and upward to their heavenly home.

My prayer today is that the pilgrims who pass through this house will indeed return to their homes with firmer faith, more joyful hope and more ardent love for the Lord, ready to commit themselves with fresh zeal to the task of bearing witness to Christ in the world in which they live and work. And I pray too that their visit to the See of Peter will deepen their love for the universal Church and unite them more closely with Peter's Successor, charged with feeding and gathering into one the Lord's flock from every corner of the world. Commending all of them, and all of you, to the intercession of Our Lady, Help of Christians and Saint Mary MacKillop, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of the joys that await us in our eternal home.

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