



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
IN THE PARISH OF SAINT LEO***

Melbourne (Australia), 28 November 1986

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*1. I greet you most cordially in the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a joy to be with you in the Parish of Saint Leo. In greeting you I also wish to greet every parish community in Australia and to tell you how important you are for Christ and his Church. Saint Leo the Great, as you know, was one of my predecessors as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Saint Peter. In addition to his other talents he was an eloquent preacher of God's word. One truth that he vigorously proclaimed was the ever-present reality of Jesus Christ. Christ's life did not end with his death on the Cross, and the Church does not live with her gaze fixed only on the past. As Saint Leo said in one of his sermons: "Not in history alone do we know these things but in virtue of present achievements". Jesus lives today in the Church!

Jesus lives today in the Parish of Saint Leo! Jesus lives in each one of you who has been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!2. During his earthly life, Jesus spent thirty years in the little village of Nazareth. He was known as the son of a carpenter. He was not yet known as the Son of God. In fact, when he did identify himself as the Messiah, his own people did not accept him. They did not recognize him as the Saviour of the world. And neither did the city of Jerusalem. Saint Luke tells us that on one occasion when Jesus saw the city he wept over it, saying: "If you in your turn had only understood on this day the message of peace! But, alas, it is hidden from your eyes!... and all because you did not recognize your opportunity when God offered it". Nazareth and Jerusalem teach us the importance of remembering that Christ is present among us. His farewell words to his disciples were: "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time". The Risen Christ is with us. He is present in the Christian family. He is present in the parish community. He is present wherever "two or three meet in his name".3. Every Christian community, then, must become more vividly aware that Christ is living in its midst. This is why prayer and worship are the centre of parish life. As the Second Vatican Council stated: "The liturgy is the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows". The Sunday Eucharistic celebration draws together all the members of the parish. At the Table of the Lord, they share their hopes and aspirations, their fears and sorrows, their efforts to put their faith into practice, and their desire for God's mercy. Through the One Bread and the One Cup, they are united with Christ the Saviour and renewed in his saving love. At the same time, the bonds between them are strengthened so that, despite great human diversity, they become more closely united in the communion of the

Church.4. What we celebrate in the Eucharist is the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, the Redemption which he won for us and for the whole human race. From the Liturgy, therefore, we are sent forth to serve the Risen Lord who is present in our neighbour. The first service which the Church offers to the world is the service of truth, the service of sharing the Good News of salvation. This is done through evangelization, catechesis and education; and hence through the Catholic School and the various programmes of catechetical instruction. It is done through the creative use of the mass media. To hand on our Catholic faith to young people is to give them a firm foundation for building a happy future. The need for instruction is not limited to the young. At every stage in our life, faith seeks understanding and needs the light of Christ. There is also the service of evangelical witness. Working men and women serve Christ in the daily life of the marketplace, the office, the factory or wherever they happen to live and work. When we work honestly and carefully and in a spirit of charity towards others, we help to sanctify the world. The Christian family fulfils a vital role in God's plan of eternal salvation. The fidelity of husband and wife reflects the faithful love of Christ for the Church. And the family manifests in a unique way the priceless value of every human life, from the child in the womb to the very old.5. A parish must always try to widen its horizons and make a continual effort to be a community open to everyone. It should look beyond its own boundaries to the wider community of the diocese and of the universal Church. For we belong to the Catholic Church, a Church which is truly universal. Single people and youth can make a very important contribution in this effort to look beyond the home parish. Single people who love Christ with a chaste and generous heart have their own gifts to bring to parish life. Since they do not have the daily obligations of a husband or wife and children, they often have more opportunities to help both the Church and society in general. Their own experience of single life can make them especially aware of those who are often forgotten and overlooked by society. Young people naturally feel drawn to people of different backgrounds and cultures. They are eager to make new friends and discover new worlds. They are willing to take the initiative in overcoming the prejudices and divisions of the past and to help build a world of true peace. To all of you the youth of this parish and of all Australia, I repeat what I said in my Apostolic Letter to the Youth of the World: "May you experience the truth that he, Christ, looks upon you with love!... My wish for each of you is that you may discover this look of Christ, and experience it in all its depth. I do not know at what moment in your life. I think that it will happen when you need it most: perhaps in suffering, perhaps together with the witness of a pure conscience, as in the case of that young man in the Gospel, or perhaps precisely in an opposite situation: together with the sense of guilt, with remorse of conscience. For Christ looked at Peter too in the hour of his fall: when he had three times denied his Master".6. We all need Christ's look of love: every individual, every family, every parish. The whole world needs the love of Christ our Redeemer. And we receive this love through the Church. Christ communicates his love through the word of God and the sacraments which are offered to you each day in Saint Leo's Parish. Christ has given us this firm promise: "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time". Dear people of Saint Leo's Parish: Christ is with you today and always. *He lives in your hearts!* © Copyright 1986 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana