



# The Holy See

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PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

***ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
FOR THE OPENING OF THE  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION CENTRE***

*Perth (Australia), 30 November 1986*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. I am pleased to be here for this opening of the Catholic Education Centre for the Church in Western Australia. This is an event of special significance. The Centre itself, which houses the Catholic Education Office and the Catholic Institute, builds upon the worthy achievements of Catholic educators in the past, and looks constructively to the future. The Centre is a sign of the Church's commitment to educate people of all ages – adults as well as youth – and it is a concrete means for accomplishing that goal. I willingly commend you for this important initiative and for the Gospel zeal which it symbolizes.

I acknowledge with gratitude the presence of representatives of the Federal and State Governments. I also greet the representatives of the whole Catholic education community of Western Australia, as well as those from the Western Australian College of Advanced Education and from the Perth College of Divinity. Thank you all for being here. Education is a primary human right, and thus it is a fundamental concern of both civil society and the Church. Its purpose is described in the words of the Second Vatican Council which stated: "True education aims at the formation of the human person with respect to his ultimate goal, and simultaneously with respect to the good of those societies of which he is a member, and in whose responsibilities he will share as an adult". Consequently through this Centre, as through all the many other educational initiatives of the Church, a twofold goal is pursued: education in the faith, and education in the knowledge necessary for people to assume their personal responsibilities within their families, at their place of work and in the larger society. Jesus' last words to his disciples were a command to proclaim the Gospel to the people of every time and place: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations: baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you". These words are relevant for us today. They retain their same force and challenge. And you have heard this challenge here in Western Australia. You have heard it and are eager to meet it.

2. And indeed what immense challenges confront Catholic educators in today's world. It is a world

in which materialism and the pursuit of pleasure distract many people from hearing the voice of the Lord and even the voice of their own inner longings. At the same time, there are great signs of hope, indications that many others are coming to see the emptiness of a life apart from God, and are experiencing a new hunger and thirst for God. In the midst of these different currents of the modern world, Catholic education seeks to be faithful to its religious dimension. Catholic education is called upon to develop the gift of faith. It aims at bringing into the fullness of the Christian life those who have been baptized. It seeks to foster a desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and a longing to share more completely in the life of the Most Holy Trinity.

In today's world, we must help young people and adults to have a clear and consistent understanding of the faith, so that they will be able to affirm their Christian and Catholic identity. Only then will they be able to bear joyful witness to Christ in the changing times in which we live. Education must also assist the members of the Church to grow in an appreciation of their human vocation, since all are called to help make the world a better place. If people possess truly human values and sound moral principles, they will be enabled to find "solutions which are truly human" for the problems of their lives. Christians know that their faith helps them to contribute more effectively to the good of the society in which they live.

3. It is appropriate that this building which we bless today should house both the Catholic Education Office and the Catholic Institute. These two bodies together are responsible for a wide range of Catholic educational efforts in Western Australia. You educate children. You help adults grow in the faith. You aim at promoting full maturity in Christ by caring for spiritual needs and by fostering the development of physical, moral and intellectual talents.

Of course, a total Christian education cannot be given by teachers alone. Full personal growth takes place in the home, the parish and the civic community, as well as in the school. Catholic education is the responsibility of the entire Church, and its effectiveness depends upon how much all the members of the local Church work together. Here in Western Australia you have a rich heritage of sacrifice and dedication. As we look out from this building over Subiaco, the very name reminds us of men like Bishop Salvado, who personified the great Benedictine tradition with its love for learning and its evangelizing zeal. We think of the spirit of self-sacrifice of the priests, most of whom came from abroad to build the Church in Western Australia. We think also of the generous efforts of the religious, who, giving little thought to their own comfort and needs, kept always before their eyes the mission of furthering God's Kingdom. In this context we remember especially the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their untiring solicitude for the well-being and education of the young women in their care. This is the legacy that you have received, together with the wealth of experience handed down by your families. It is a splendid basis upon which to continue Christ's mission in the future.

4. Before closing, I wish to express sincere appreciation for the financial aid which the Commonwealth and State Governments give to non-government schools. It seems only just that such sharing should take place, since those who benefit from the aid become productive citizens of Australian society. I am confident that the honest and fruitful lives of the many graduates of these institutions have proved that this assistance is more than worthwhile for all to Australia.

I assure you of my prayers for the success of this Centre and for the success of all your efforts in the vital work of Catholic education. May you and those you serve grow always in the truth and love of God. For as Saint John says: "In our life of truth and love we shall have grace, mercy and

peace from God the Father and from Jesus Christ". *May God bless you all.*

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