



# The Holy See

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**LETTER OF PAUL VI  
TO CARDINAL JAMES ROBERT KNOX  
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE**

*To Our Venerable Brother James Robert Knox  
Archbishop of Melbourne*

We cannot let pass the occasion of the twenty-fourth Conference of the Australian Council of Catholic Women without sending a message of paternal greeting and encouragement such as the participants in the previous national meetings have received from the See of Peter; for this is a period in history when women's fundamental equality with men, their right and duty to take an active part in public life, and the peculiar and irreplaceable contribution they can make to the political, social and cultural wellbeing of humanity, are recognized as perhaps never before.

Conscious of the increasingly active role that women now play in the whole life of society, the Second Vatican Council declared it of great importance that they should participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, art. 9).

There can scarcely be a field on which women have greater interest in bringing their influence for good to bear than that of the home. The world needs the example of their unselfish love that the sanctity of marriage may be upheld, of their prayerful guidance that the values of Christian upbringing may be actualized, and of their devoted vigilance that the dignity and autonomy of the family may be defended.

But there is no sphere of human activity which cannot be irradiated by woman's beneficent power. In these technological days, when man runs the risk of becoming the slave rather than the master of the machines which his God-given intelligence has made, and is even in danger of senselessly destroying civilization by means of the terrible forces he has learned to unleash, it is for woman to save him from his peril and ensure that our race will have a future that is secure and human.

By their example, their word and their activity, let women point out the right path for humanity to take in this age of transformation. Let them draw inspiration from prayer and from the Gospel message, remaining close to the Saviour in their sorrows and in their joys, as, when the soldiers looked on the One they had pierced, close to the Cross stood a woman, her soul too sword-pierced, and as it was a woman who, staying close to the Tomb, was the first to see the Risen Christ and to bring the world the joyful news of His glorification.

With these thoughts in Our heart on the importance of the part they play in the Church, We invoke rich heavenly graces of guidance and encouragement upon the delegates assembled in Melbourne, and We bestow upon you, Venerable Brother, and upon all participating in the Conference, Our special Apostolic Benediction.

*From the Vatican, September 28, 1969.*

**PAULUS PP. VI**