



The Holy See

PASTORAL VISIT IN AUSTRALIA

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II AT THE «WILLSON TRAINING CENTRE»

Hobart (Australia), 27 November 1986

Dear Friends,

Dear Tasmanians, 1. My visit to Australia is a constant discovery and rediscovery of a unique and fascinating land. And today I have the pleasure of being in Tasmania, an especially beautiful and historical part of the nation. To all of the people of this State I offer my heartfelt greetings. And I give thanks to our heavenly Father who has enabled me, the latest in the line of the Successors of Peter, to make this visit to the People of God in the Archdiocese of Hobart. I am very happy to be with you, the young people of the Willson Training Centre. You are here to improve your skills so that you may be better equipped to find work. I encourage you with all my heart. I greet the staff of Centacare, which for over a quarter of a century has been providing services for family and social needs, particularly, in recent years, in relation to the problem of unemployment. I am aware of the important assistance given by the Government and the whole community for the running of this Centre. I sincerely trust that your efforts will be rewarded and your hopes fulfilled. 2. The nature of this Centre leads me directly to the theme of our meeting today: the very serious question of unemployment, or rather the situation of the men and women who are suffering the effects of unemployment. It is precisely as a human problem, a problem affecting the life and dignity of human beings, a problem with a decidedly ethical and moral character, that the Church approaches the question of unemployment. The Church has a mission of service to the whole human family. It is above all a religious and moral mission, linked to the Redemption of the human race through the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Church knows that the call to accept the Redemption reaches human beings in the actual circumstances of everyday life. And man's eternal destiny is closely connected with all the elements that affect human freedom, human rights and human advancement. Work – or the lack of work – is one such element – a most important one. 3. Unemployment is the privation of all the values that work represents and! contributes to individuals, families and society. Work is a right and a duty. Elsewhere I have said that: "man must work, both because the Creator has commanded it and because of his own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed. Man must work out of regard for others, especially his own family, but also for the society to which he belongs, the country of which he is a citizen, and the whole human family of which he is a member, since he is the heir to the work of generations and at the same time a sharer in building the future of those who will come after him. All this constitutes the moral obligation of work". When we speak of the moral obligation to work, we mean that everyone has the duty to share in

some real way in the great task of "humanizing" the universe, that is, of making the world a more hospitable place and a better instrument of personal and social development. It is also true that "work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfilment as a human being and indeed, in a sense, becomes 'more a human being' ". The sweat and toil which work necessarily involves in the present condition of the human race mean that the Christian can share in the work that Christ came to do. Christ saved the world by suffering and dying on the Cross. By enduring the toil of work in union with Christ, the Son of God, man collaborates with him for the redemption of humanity. He shows that he is a true disciple of Christ by carrying the cross of work every day in the activity that he is called upon to perform.⁴ Work has other implications. It is an important condition of family life, since the family needs the means of subsistence, the money which is usually earned through the work of one or more of its members. In fact the family is a community made possible by work, and at the same time it is the first school of work, within the home, for every person. Today, the presence of women and mothers in almost every sector of the working world is a fact that has to be considered. They should be able to exercise their gifts and abilities in various forms of employment, but at the same time due respect must be given to their obligations and aspirations. Work should be so structured that women do not have to bargain for their advancement at the expense of their own dignity or at the expense of their role inside the family. The mother's role needs to be socially re-evaluated. Her tasks in the home require a great commitment, they demand much time and love. Children need care, love and affection. This attention must be given if children are to develop into secure, responsible persons, with moral, religious and psychological maturity. While the responsibility for family development rests on both mother and father, still very much depends on the specific mother/child relationship. Society can take credit when it enables mothers to devote time to their children and bring them up in accordance with their progressive needs. The freedom of women as mothers must be clearly protected, so that they are free from psychological or any other form of discrimination, especially by comparison with women without family obligations. Mothers must not be financially penalized by the very society which they serve in a most exalted and necessary way.⁵ A further point I wish to make concerns the disabled. They are citizens with full rights, and they should be helped to have a real share in the life of society. It would be radically unworthy of man, and a denial of our common humanity, to deny disabled people access to the full life of the community in accordance with their possibilities and potential. To do so would be to practise a serious form of discrimination. Here is a clear case in which work, in the objective sense, should be subordinated to the dignity of man, to the person who works and not to economic advantage.⁶ Since the Second World War, Australia has shown great generosity in opening its doors to immigrants from other countries and to refugees seeking a new homeland. In return, these new Australians have contributed their own culture and working skills towards the development and enrichment of their new land. It is important that, in the matter of working rights, those who began their working lives in other lands should not be put at a disadvantage in comparison with other workers. This matter too calls for generosity on the part of Australian society. The value of work should not be measured by differences of nationality, sex, religion or race.⁷ In a sense, unemployment is a modern phenomenon. Demographic and technological changes have produced a situation in which there is not sufficient work for all those capable of it. It is a worldwide phenomenon. It is particularly serious in the Third World countries which have not yet reached an adequate stage of economic development and in which there are large numbers of young people looking for work. But it is almost as bad in many industrialized nations, for very complex reasons which it is not possible to analyse here. In Australia too the pain of unemployment is suffered by many of you and your fellow citizens, and not just the young, but also by men and women who are bread winners for their families. Even when social services help to provide the bare necessities of life, being unemployed cuts into their dignity as persons and seriously curtails their chances and opportunities in life. Unemployment brings many evils to a community and to a nation. It causes economic and social

inequality. It can cause such stress to the family and society that there follows a real breakdown of the institutions that should ensure human advancement. Those who have work may forget those who do not. The problem calls for cooperation in planning and positive action by all agencies. Government departments, large companies and small businesses, employers' federations, unions and their alliances – all of these have a crucial part to play in finding solutions. The media too can provide positive support and information by promoting programmes for the unemployed. Justice demands a concerted effort by everyone. Christ's commandment of love urges all Christians to together on behalf of the unemployed.⁸ Retraining programmes are already under way in this country. Governments and private organizations sponsoring them are to be congratulated. Such programmes are of special importance since they acknowledge the needs of the young upon whom the future social, economic and family life of the nation will depend. But the needs of the older unemployed must not be overlooked. There are indications that in recent years the numbers of unemployed have increased as well as the average duration of unemployment. This means that many people can be excluded from the labour market for almost their whole working lives with little hope of regaining regular employment. Some statistics present a bleak picture for thousands of people who would be only too happy to work. Powerful efforts must be made to find new means of meeting this situation so that older workers' skills may be re-used, or new skills taught to them. Most of all they need the practical help that will rekindle their enthusiasm and motivation to be engaged in creative work. In programmes of training and retraining, it is important to follow the principle of self-help. This policy safeguards the individual's dignity. All are encouraged to use their abilities to the full, and to realize that their unemployed status is not a matter of personal failure.⁹ Above all, efforts must be made to create new jobs. This is a most difficult point. We all recognize that the creation of new work in our modern society has become a most complex matter. Very often it is no longer merely a matter of local or even national willingness and capability. It requires a re-ordering and adjustment of economic structures and priorities on a global level. The Church does not have technical solutions to offer, nor the means to resolve such problems. But in her service to humanity she has a most important task: to remind those involved at every level of economic activity that unemployment cannot be treated solely as an issue of economics. Unemployment is a human problem of vast dimension. The Church can and does offer a social teaching. It is based on the inviolable dignity of every human person. Work is seen as collaboration with the Creator and as a condition of the self-development which is the right of every individual. The Church seeks to motivate and educate so that qualified and faith-inspired Christians will help to find solutions to the urgent problem of unemployment. Sometimes the local Churches are in a position to start or collaborate in concrete programmes of service to the unemployed. Centacare, the Catholic Church's Family Agency in the Archdiocese of Hobart, which established and administers Willson Training Centre, is a praiseworthy example of this kind of endeavour. Other worthy forms of service elsewhere also deserve great support.¹⁰ Young people of this Centre, friends of Tasmania and of all Australia: in your efforts to combat unemployment and to find work, know that the Church is with you. She understands your aspirations, and she appeals on your behalf and on behalf of all the unemployed to the conscience of the world. The Church appeals for a new vision of work centred on the value and dignity of the human person. She appeals for a re-ordering of the economic order, so that it will truly serve the integral well-being of the human family. To all of you – the staff at Centacare and the Willson Training Centre, and you young people training for work – to the unemployed, to all who are seeking solutions to the problem of unemployment in Australia, to those serving the needs of individuals and families suffering from unemployment – to all of you I offer my encouragement. Do not lose heart! The Church will work with you and for you. And she will continue to call for the solidarity of all in this matter that so closely touches your lives. He assured of my prayers and support. In the name of Jesus Christ I invoke upon you strength and courage. © Copyright 1986 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

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