



To My Venerable Brother
Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy

It is with great gladness that, through you, I convey my greetings to the Most Reverend Edmund Collins, Bishop of Darwin, and all those meeting in Alice Springs from 2 to 7 October 2006 to mark the Twentieth Anniversary of the visit of my beloved predecessor Pope John Paul II. Please be assured of my prayers and spiritual closeness at this time of joyful remembrance.

The art of remembrance, exercised within an arch of hope, is not just an occasion of simple recollection. It renews purpose. For the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities of Australia gathered today, this is expressed in the desire to propose anew the challenges with which Pope John Paul II encouraged them: "be faithful to your worthy traditions, adapt your living culture whenever this is required and above all open your hearts to the consoling, purifying and uplifting message of Jesus Christ who died so that we might have life and have it to the full" (Address to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, Alice Springs 29 November 1986, *Insegnamenti* IX, 2 1986, p. 1763).

How might these challenges be embraced when there is much that could lead to discouragement or even despair? As Jesus, during his time on earth, moved from village to village preaching the Good News of truth and love, he captured the attention of those who heard him. Unlike the Scribes, who were rejected for their hypocrisy, we are told that the Lord "made a deep impression because he taught them with authority" (*Mk* 1: 22). Indeed, every human community needs and seeks strong, inspiring

leaders to guide others into the way of hope. Much rests therefore upon the example of the Elders of communities. I encourage them to exercise authority wisely through faithfulness to their traditions - songs, stories, paintings, dances - and most especially through a renewed expression of their deep awareness of God, made possible through the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Your Eminence, through you I wish to appeal directly to the young people present: keep alight the flame of hope and 'walk tall'. Christ is at your side! Even in the darkest hour his light continues to shine. Indeed, with the Psalmist we can proclaim "I hear whispering of many - terror on every side - but I trust in you, O Lord: I say, 'You are my God'" (Ps 31:13-15). Don't allow your "dreaming" to be undermined by the shallow call of those who might lure you into the misuse of alcohol and drugs, as promises of happiness. Such promises are false, and lead only to a circle of misery and entrapment. Instead, I exhort you to foster the encounter with the mystery of God's spirit active in you and in creation, beckoning you to a life of purpose, service, satisfaction, and joy.

To the wider community, I wish to repeat what I have already alluded to in my address earlier this year to the nation's Ambassador to the Holy See. Much has been achieved along the path of racial reconciliation yet there is still much to be accomplished. No one can exempt themselves from this process. While no culture may use past hurt as an excuse to avoid facing the difficulties in meeting the contemporary social needs of its own people, it is also the case that only through the readiness to accept historical truth can a sound understanding of contemporary reality be reached and the vision of a harmonious future

espoused. I therefore again encourage all Australians to address with compassion and determination the deep underlying causes of the plight which still afflicts so many Aboriginal citizens. Commitment to truth opens the way to lasting reconciliation through the healing process of asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness - two indispensable elements for peace. In this way our memory is purified, our hearts are made serene, and our future is filled with a well-founded hope in the peace which springs from truth.

With these sentiments of prayerful solicitude, and confident in the love of Christ which draws us forward (cf. 2 Cor 5:14), I cordially impart to you and all those gathered my Apostolic Blessing, which I readily extend to their family members wherever they may be.

From the Vatican, 22 September 2006

Benedictus PP. XVI.