



July 17, 2008

**Archbishop Philip Wilson, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops
Conference**

Welcome to the Holy Father at Barangaroo

Holy Father,

It is my very great honour to welcome you to Australia on behalf of all who are gathered here in your presence and the many others with us through the media and in spirit. I greet you in the love and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Against this magnificent backdrop of Sydney Harbour we thank you for coming such a long distance to Australia to lead us in the wonderful celebrations of World Youth Day.

It is a most significant occasion for us. It is the fourth time in our nation's history that we have had the presence of the Holy Father in our midst. The two visits of your beloved predecessor, Pope John Paul II, and the 1970 visit of Pope Paul VI, remain etched in our hearts and minds and we consider it a true blessing that we are now able to welcome you to the Great South Land of the Holy Spirit, as this continent was first named, the land under the Southern Cross.

Holy Father, gathered in your presence, we renew our faith and commitment to Christ and the Church.

Looking out at this wonderful sight, of the youth of the world, drawn together in faith and love, we are filled with hope – the true Christian hope that you have spoken about so beautifully in your Encyclical *Spe Salvi*. Your presence with us over these coming days, reinforces our hope as we all seek personally to encounter Jesus Christ in ever deeper and truer ways.

In selecting the World Youth Day Theme: *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses"*, you remind us that we

are not alone in our efforts to live a Christ-centred and hope-filled life. We have the sure guidance of the Holy Spirit who will give us power and strength even when we feel at our weakest. Strengthened by the Spirit we are then challenged to rise up and live out our lives in a way that marks us out as witnesses for Christ.

Holy Father, we commit ourselves to the intense spiritual experience of World Youth Day and to immersing ourselves, with you and with each other in prayer, reflection and action during these days, open to the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, to renew us and to guide us.

We are a young nation, inhabiting a land where the ancient culture of our Aboriginal people has given a spiritual dimension to all the features we see. Your arrival here today marks a special day in the history of this nation and we pray that the events of the coming days will bring forth abundant blessings upon us all, especially our young people gathered here and upon all the youth of the world, and on all the Church, and upon our cherished Australian nation.

Holy Father, you are most welcome.