Media at the service of peace - Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Australia will celebrate World Communications Day this Sunday, May 25, with an emphasis on the Pope's call for the media to be at the service of authentic peace.

Many Catholic Masses around the nation will have special prayers and hymns focusing on the role of the communications media in society and in the life of the Church.

Pope John Paul II's theme for the 37th World Communications Day is: "The Communications Media at the Service of Authentic Peace in the Light of 'Pacem in Terris'.

This marks the 40th anniversary of Pope John XXIII's landmark encyclical Peace on Earth.

In it, Pope John called for the media to be fair and impartial in promoting the spread of mutual understanding between the nations of the world and decried the "ways of disseminating information, which violate the principles of truth and justice, and injure the reputation of another nation".

In his message for World Communications Day, Pope John Paul II says the media is now "the modern arena in which ideas are shared and people grow in mutual understanding and solidarity".

As a result, all must work to see that the media in "reporting events, correctly explaining issues and fairly representing diverse points of view" maintains the highest ideals of promoting truth, serving justice and fostering love and trust among all peoples and nations.

"Terrorism, conflict in the Middle East and other regions, threats and counter-threats, injustice, exploitation, and assaults upon the dignity and sanctity of human life both before and after birth are dismaying realities of our times," the Pope said in his message.

"Meanwhile, the power of the media to shape human relationships and influence political and social life, both for good and for ill, has enormously increased.

"The fundamental moral requirement of all communication is respect for and service of the truth."

World Communications Day will be celebrated in Australia this Sunday and on June 1 in other countries.