

# PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

## Today's Missionary Challenge

### *My Dear People*

On this Feast of Pentecost I wish to speak to you about the urgent missionary challenge we have in our own country as I announce the formation of a new initiative that will help us face it.

The first Pentecost ushered in the age of the Holy Spirit. With a mighty rush of wind, with tongues of fire appearing over the heads of the Apostles, the Apostles and Disciples gathered in the Upper Room felt the surge of power of the Holy Spirit preparing them for the great Mission of the Church. They were to proclaim from the rooftops that Jesus, the Risen Lord, had freed all of humanity from the burden of sin and evil and opened up a new freedom which would lead to eternal life with God.



They understood their Mission was to proclaim Jesus as Lord and Saviour. In short, they were to evangelize the world. They were to offer a world burdened and bound by sin and violence the peace that comes from Jesus and the new life he won that lasts forever. They were to be bearers and witnesses of the Good News of salvation.

I want to remind you on this Pentecost Day that the Mission of the Church is still the same and that it has become increasingly urgent in these days of rising secularism.

I also want to say that the task of the Church to offer Good News to the world is the task of every member of the Church, not just the clergy or the Religious. The call of our Baptism and Confirmation is to share with others the faith that we have received as a precious gift.

### **EVANGELIZATION**



The late Pope John Paul II pointed out that the first means of evangelization is the "witness of an authentically Christian life". Every member of the Church is called to manifest to the world the attractiveness of an authentically Christian life.

We have traditionally relied on family, church and school to pass the faith from one generation to another. We have also relied on the support of a free society to help this take place. Regrettably, the world has changed.

No longer is it easy for parents to hand on the faith safely to their children. They are enticed by the world in other directions, often harmful. Fragmented family life, increasingly common today, is a massive obstacle to the safe transfer of faith, despite the best efforts of school and parish.

Even the religious freedom that we enjoy is threatened by secular and anti-religious forces that often oppose and ridicule our beliefs.

Our response is to be strong and trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome difficulties and resistance. Pentecost is both a sign and an assurance of the power of God over the forces of evil.

This Pentecost I want to say that we cannot allow ourselves to be intimidated or silenced by the forces that oppose us. We must remain faithful to our call to offer the world the liberating truth of Jesus Christ. The world needs it. Jesus has entrusted us with his Good News and given us the Holy Spirit as the source of our power and courage.

### **MISSIONARY ACTION**

Recently the Holy Father addressed the new Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. He called for an intensive "missionary action" at this moment of history, the changing culture demands new methods and new vigour in carrying out the Mission of the Church.

The Church must proclaim the truth. As it does, the Holy Spirit acts within the heart of the listener to create a stir of interest, a positive response, and a desire to hear more.

This is followed up with a "catechesis", that is a presentation of Jesus as the one who frees, who lifts the spirits, who shows the Way, the Truth and the Life to the seeker and leads him or her to the community of his followers, the Church.

The truth is that our evangelizing efforts today are mainly confined to baptized Christians. This is not enough. We must proclaim the Gospel to the world of unbelievers, to people who do not know Jesus Christ.

We must be missionary again, this time within our own country.



### **FAITH CENTRE PRIORITIES**

To this end I want to announce the formation of a "Faith Centre" for evangelization, whose first priority will be the unbelievers.

The second priority is to reach out to lapsed or faraway Catholics, the "lost sheep" as it were.

The third priority is the deepening of faith of practising Catholics.

To ensure that we remain missionary, we have chosen the outreach to unbelievers as our first priority. It can so easily be abandoned because it is difficult and requires great patience and tenacity, and yet it is what Jesus called for.

The "Faith Centre" will shortly open at 450 Hay Street, Perth, not far from the Cathedral. Until we settle on a full-time Director, I will head a group of priests and laypeople in setting up the Centre to make it open to the public.

It will contain a reading and resource room for enquirers. Volunteers will offer visitors a ready welcome.

The Centre will seek to proclaim to the people of Perth the truth of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways, through television, radio, newspapers, the internet with all its new forms of social communication and personal contact.

It will seek to draw people closer to Christ and his Church by personal guidance and by the processes of catechesis of the Church such as the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

It will support evangelizing groups that seek to proclaim Jesus to the world.

In addition, it will offer resources to parishes and other groups that seek to welcome people back to the practice of their faith, and deepen the faith of their own people.

The B J Hickey Foundation for Biblical Studies and Scholarships will be housed within the Centre.

I point out that giving priority to unbelievers is the special feature of the Faith Centre. It will work closely with the Catholic Enquiry Centre based in Sydney. I ask your prayers for this new venture which seeks to carry out in some small way in this part of the world the command of Jesus:



"Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations".  
(Mt.28:19)

**+B J Hickey**  
**Archbishop of Perth**  
**Pentecost Sunday**  
**12<sup>th</sup> June 2011**