

An extract from Legislative Council Hansard

Tuesday 12 April 2005

CONDOLENCE - DEATH OF POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr PARKINSON (Wellington - Deputy Leader of the Government in the Council - Motion) - Mr President, I move -

That this House expresses deep regret and sorrow at the passing of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, and reflects on the many great achievements of His Holiness during and prior to his 26 years as leader of the Catholic faith.

Mr President, today I rise to express sadness on behalf of the Tasmanian Government and indeed the wider Tasmanian community at the death of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. Members of the Catholic faith throughout the world were saddened by the news that the Pope had died on Saturday 2 April. His Holiness will be remembered as both a great leader of the Catholic faith of 26 years but also as a great humanitarian who strived to bring together nations and religions through the world.

It is said that His Holiness was perhaps the most visible man in history, making 104 pilgrimages to 129 countries. His Holiness visited Africa four times and Latin America five times. But it is not just the distances travelled but the acts of kindness and reconciliation that will be remembered most.

His Holiness was the first Pope to visit Rome's ancient synagogue in 1986 and he established diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Israel in 1993. As a symbol of regret, His Holiness placed a handwritten acknowledgment of Christian sins against the Jewish people in a crevice of the western wall in Jerusalem in March 2000. His Holiness issued a series of unprecedented apologies: to the Jews for Christian anti-Semitism, to Protestants for the Catholic Church's role in post-Reformation wars of religion and to the world for acts such as the disciplining of Galileo.

Six years before the High Court's Mabo judgment, His Holiness rejected the concept of terra nullius and affirmed Aboriginal land rights. His Holiness also shocked many in the church when he participated in an Aboriginal smoking ceremony at the beginning of mass in Australia. The compassion and relevance to everyday people was clearly demonstrated in His Holiness's visit to Australia in 1986 through such acts as: en route to and from Darwin, His Holiness spoke directly to students of the School of the Air; in Sydney he visited a western suburbs industrial plant and, off the cuff, spoke to workers in many languages; he stopped at a fourth grade classroom at a parish school in Melbourne, sat down and talked to the children.

Included in his visit to Australia was of course his visit to Tasmania in November 1986. At a mass in Hobart his Holiness remarked of Tasmania that from poor beginnings what riches flowed. He went on to say:

As successor of Peter, I have come to join you in giving thanks for your rich heritage and to encourage you to transmit this precious treasure to future generations.'

His Holiness further remarked that from Tasmania came the first Australian-born priest, Father Daniel Connell, the first Australian-born woman religious sister, Sister Teresa Robinson, and the first Australian-born religious brother, Brother Patrick Kinnear.

I know that many Tasmanians experienced a numbness and a sense of loss upon hearing the sad news of the Pope's death. He was much loved by many within the Tasmanian community and will be remembered as a man of integrity and decency. His Holiness Pope John Paul II has been a significant figure in world politics for a large part of our lives. His hand in Eastern European politics during the second half of last century is something that will be a particular focus for historians but his memory will be served well for those of the Catholic faith and others through his writings, poetry and other works.

Many years ago His Holiness wrote that when the moment of our definitive passage comes, grant that we may face it with serenity. After many years of suffering with Parkinson's disease may His Holiness now rest with serenity.

Motion agreed to *nemine contradicente*.