



## PRIME MINISTER

FOR PRESS

15 AUGUST 1978

Mr Speaker, I move that the House notes the death on 6 August 1978 of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, and expresses its profound regret at his passing.

With the death of Pope Paul - the spiritual leader of the world's 700 million Roman Catholics for the last 15 years - the world lost a great religious leader and a messenger of peace.

In many ways his papacy came in an unique age.

It coincided with an upsurge of the ecumenical movement and far-reaching and fundamental changes in society throughout the world. It was an age, too, of challenge to the traditional spiritual authority of the Church.

Pope Paul sought to maintain the essential body of doctrine of his Church, and to uphold its institutional character. He saw his duty as being to steer a middle course within the Church, between those elements calling for change and those who defended continuity.

Pope Paul handled these challenges calmly and wisely, with moderation, tenacity and courage.

Pope Paul made strenuous efforts to encourage the ecumenical movement for Christian unity. He actively encouraged contact and fraternity within Christianity and between the major world religions.

He sponsored ecumenical meetings for Christian unity, held numerous meetings with leaders of other Churches, and looked forward to the eventual resolution of disunity.

Pope Paul also will be remembered for his important reforms to the organisation and structure of the Church.

The implementation of the Vatican Council's decision to allow celebration of the mass in the Vernacular was an historic event of his reign.

There were important changes initiated by Pope Paul in the field of international affairs. He strove tirelessly for world peace and for higher ideals in the conduct of world affairs.

Under him, the Vatican enhanced its already high stature in international diplomacy. It became a notable contributor to conferences such as those on world food problems, population, humanitarian law in armed conflict, and security and co-operation in Europe.

Foreign policy concerns of the Holy See under Pope Paul included: disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons; improvement of social welfare; assisting the development of the poorer countries; evolution of relations with Marxist regimes; and a desire to expand official communications with the Communist, Islamic and Asian world to ensure maintenance of freedom of Christian observance.

He emphasised peace as the most essential need of our time, and this was reflected in his innovation of the observance of 1 January as the world day of peace.

I recall with warmth and appreciation my private audience with Pope Paul only last year, during which he gave expression to his concern for and promotion of peace amongst all the world's citizens.

Pope Paul travelled widely, disregarding risks to his person, and became the first reigning Pontiff to visit all continents.

We remember the affection generated by his visit to Australia in 1970. It was during his reign that Australia opened diplomatic relations with the Holy See. These have proved of great value in the conduct of Australia's foreign affairs.

Mr Speaker, Pope Paul was a man whose great strengths and personality became clearer the longer he remained Pope. His death saddened this country. It is a supreme loss for his Church and a real loss for all men.

I commend the motion to the House.

---o0o---