RESPONSE TO
CLARE PRATT'S ADDRESS of
Monday 15 April, 2002

Grégoire NEUBOURG
Principal Sacré Coeur
Jette, Brussels, Belgium

I want to thank Sister Clare Pratt for the hopefilled words she spoke to us. Her call for building a better world including reconciliation and friendship is close to our heart. We, the lay Principals, have also to apologise for our lack of understanding in the past years.

In our country we were not prepared to take over the mission of the Society in our schools. We acted as a transfer of power and not in the way of collaboration.

The 1st World Conference of Heads of the Sacred Heart schools in Joigny -France- was very enlightening for me. I'm sure our meeting in Sydney will be as successful.

*****

Clare, your message of reconciliation and peace is one of the most beautiful aims we could realize in our lives. It is one of the foundations we try to lay down in our daily work in our schools.

To live in peace includes friendship, forgiveness, reconciliation but also the real will to look forwards. It includes the genuine wish to collaborate in making a better world, certainly now, when egoism and violence are so present all around us. As a representative of the Principals, I insist on the importance of that mission in our schools.

To educate our youth to reconciliation and peace will take many years but we must stay self-confident. It is an exacting and time-consuming task but also very gratifying. Very often when I met young alumnae (and also older of course!) I'm proud to see our efforts are rewarded. It gives me confidence and strength to go further in our educational mission.

****

I want to emphasise the importance of this kind of meeting here in Sydney. It allows us to meet each other and improves collaboration. It enables us to recharge our batteries and gives us the opportunity to make new connections, new friendships.

During the World Conference in Joigny I was impressed by the simplicity and the kindness of our colleagues of Congo in Africa. They live in very precarious and poor conditions. On his way home, one of them came to visit our school in Jette -Brussels. We -- pupils and teachers together -- were really shocked by the living conditions of the African children. Spontaneously the pupils wanted to help them by different ways such as

sending books an other school materials. Here in Sydney I'm appointed to hand about 16.000 euros to my colleague of the Sacred Heart of Congo. It is a very little gift in relation to the great needs they have. More than the gift let us have the will to create a better world where there is no place for egoism. It strengthens the bonds of friendship between our schools.

****

Finally and once again, I extend my sincere thanks to Clare for the way she shares the vision of the values of the Society. I will do everything possible to relay those values to those around me when back in Brussels in order to enlarge the family of the Sacred Heart.