



A new life in Christ...

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Sunday Resource Kit

2nd July 2023



ABOUT NATSICC



The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) is the peak advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops on issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics. The Council was founded in 1992 and the Secretariat is based in Adelaide.

Each State and Territory nominates a representative via their local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministry. In addition to a number of initiatives aimed to support First Nations Catholics, NATSICC advises the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics.

NATSICC is a not for profit organization that is funded by the Catholic Church and Caritas Australia's First Nations program.

NATSICC Logo

The NATSICC Logo depicts a willy willy, the wind force in the centre a symbol of God's Spirit. The round concentric circles at the top symbolise God and Life; the base depicts men and women receiving the Holy Spirit. The logo was designed by Mrs. Olive Boddington, from Western Australia.



NATSICC Vision Statement

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council promotes and celebrates the cultural identity of our Peoples across the Nation by living and expressing, in all its endeavours, the spirituality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Peoples.

Through this expression and recognition of our cultural identity we will find our rightful place within the Catholic Church in Australia.

Cover artwork

Artist: Troy Mardigan (Daly River)

Title: Jesus, the Living Water

This is a story about Jesus. This painting represents Jesus as the truth. And the river represents Jesus as the living water. It's flowing from the foot of the cross towards new life. And the flowers represent new life. He is the water of the dry land and the green land. And on top of the cross is the omega symbol- he is the beginning and the end.

Other Artwork: P. Wilson, L. Price

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are advised that this publication may contain images, words and mention of those that have passed.

USING THESE RESOURCES



The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council has created resources that aim to inspire and support Parishes, Organisations, and Schools in their celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. These Liturgical resources are flexible and can be adapted to suit the diverse needs of Parishes and Schools across Australia. Parishes and Schools with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are encouraged to work with local communities to incorporate Traditional rituals and symbols into their Mass.

NATSICC actively encourages open discussions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the congregation to further enhance the ways in which Traditional rituals and symbols can be used to enrich the Mass.

NATSICC LITURGY TEAM WELCOME



A New Life in Christ: Uniting as One People on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

Each year, Catholics from all corners of Australia gather on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday to celebrate the unique gifts and contributions of Australia's First Peoples. This year's theme, "**A New Life in Christ**" reflects the hope and promise of a brighter future, rooted in unity and shared commitment to positive change.

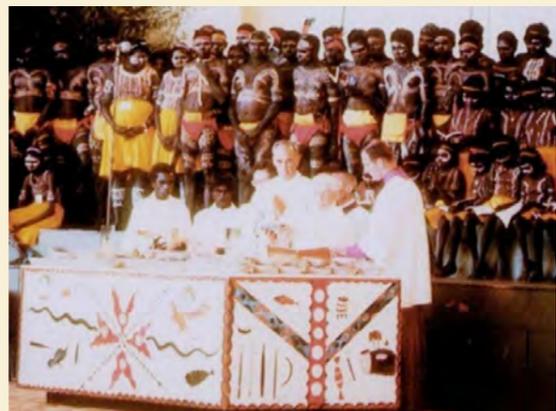
As we commemorate this special day on the Liturgical Calendar, we invite you to listen to our voices and walk alongside us on our journey towards progress. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday symbolizes our unity as one people in Christ, and we urge both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Catholics to come together in every Catholic Parish and School across this great Southern land.

We welcome any photos, stories, or articles that capture how the day was celebrated in your area. Please share them with us via email at admin@natsicc.org.au. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Caritas Australia for their invaluable contribution in designing this booklet.

Dolly McGaughey
David Miller
Regina McCarthy
NATSICC Liturgy Team

50 year Anniversary of First National Aboriginal Liturgy in Australia

2023 marks 50 years since a significant event took place at the Melbourne Myer Music Bowl in Australia. The occasion was part of the 40th International Eucharistic Congress and was titled the Australian Aboriginal Liturgy. More than 150 adults, teenagers, and a children's choir, mainly from the Kimberley region of Western Australia and the Northern Territory, participated in the event. It was the first time many people witnessed Aboriginal people expressing their Catholic faith in culturally significant ways, and it was the first public and National Aboriginal Liturgy in Australia. The Liturgy was a new attempt by the Catholic Church to re-shape the ancient Catholic ritual of the Mass by incorporating the faith experiences of those belonging to an even more ancient culture, the Aboriginal cultures.



The Liturgy was a result of the energy and commitment of many Aboriginal people, strongly supported by various priests and religious men and women. One such priest, Kevin McKelson, played a crucial role in shaping the final English version of the Liturgy. The task required deep listening, respect, and attentiveness, and approval from Rome before it could be celebrated. The Liturgy sought to express a pattern of language expression that would be accepted by many groups where the handing on of an oral tradition was often expressed by word, dance, and repetitive chants, accompanied by hand clapping, clapsticks, or didgeridoo.

Since 1973, only the Broome Diocese has attempted to find a formal expression of a more appropriate Catholic and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Liturgy. The *Missa Terra Spiritus Sancti*, Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit (2018), may be celebrated in the Diocese of Broome and other communities only with permission from the Bishop of Broome and the local bishop, and it has also been translated into Aboriginal languages. Pope John Paul II's invitation to make a contribution to the Church's life and for that contribution to be joyfully received by others remains an ongoing challenge for the Australian Church.

(Article is a summary of Fr Brian McCoy's article in Eureka Street)



ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CATHOLICS IN AUSTRALIA

First Nations Catholics are the youngest and fastest growing demographic in the Australian Catholic Church.



135,681

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics



4.6%

The percentage of Catholic population aged under 5



10

The number of Dioceses which have over one-fifth of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population who identify as Catholic



8.2%

The percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics aged under 5

Top three

Parishes

with the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics:

1

Wadeye (Darwin)

2,078

2

Dubbo (Bathurst)

1,787

3

Broome Cathedral (Broome)

1,581

with the highest percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics:

1

Palm Island (Townsville)

98.5%

2

Dubbo (Bathurst)

97.3%

3

Melville Island (Darwin)

96.4%

2016 Census

Dioceses

with the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics:

1

Brisbane

16,474

2

Darwin

9,671

3

Maitland-Newcastle

8,436

with the highest percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics:

1

Broome

62.7%

2

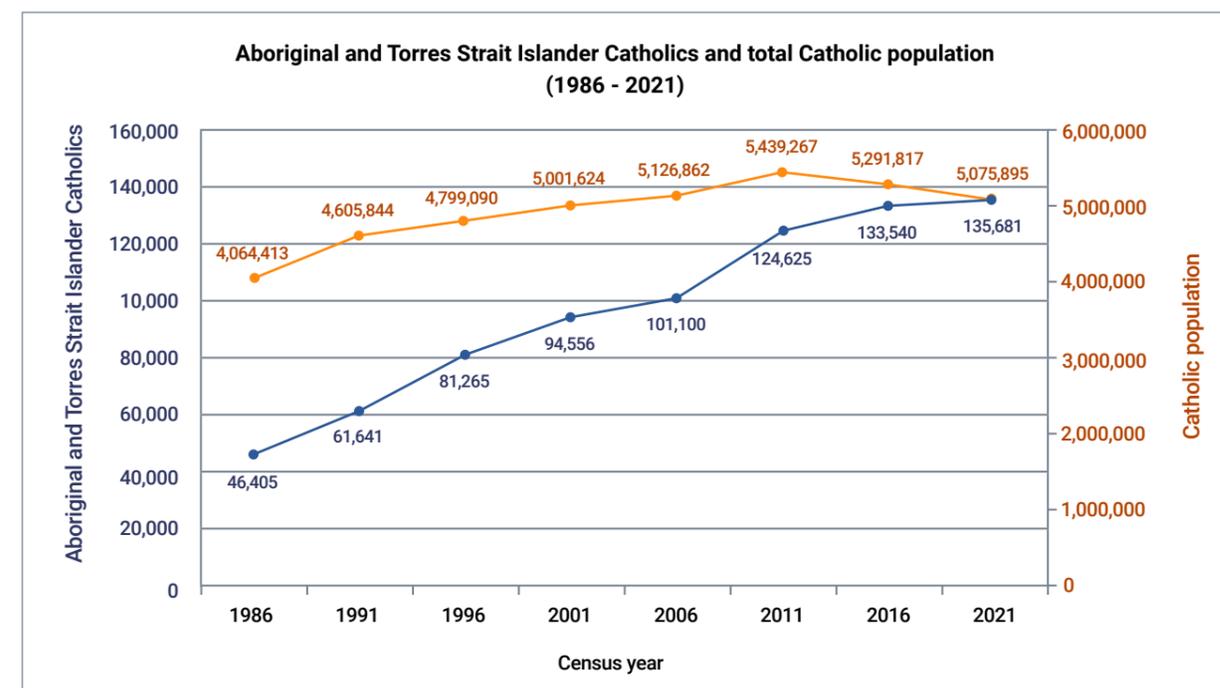
Darwin

24.8%

3

Wilcannia-Forbes

13.8%



Notes:

Prepared by the ACBC National Centre for Pastoral Research as part of the National Catholic Census Project. Data is sourced from the 2021 Census unless specified.

Data on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for some years and prior to 1971 is not recorded here due to the poor quality of data collected.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

WELCOME TO COUNTRY

An **'Acknowledgement of Country'** is a way that all people can show awareness and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the Traditional Custodians have with their Country. Both First Australians and non-Indigenous people can perform 'Acknowledgement of Country'. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the Traditional Custodians of the lands (or sea) where the Mass, event, meeting, school function or conference takes place. It can be formal or informal.

The Acknowledgement must be seen as more than simply 'ticking a box'. It is an opportunity to show the respect you have for the country, the waters and its people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been experiencing exclusion, discrimination and oppression for so long that a genuine and authentic Acknowledgement conducted by your community can mean so much to Australia's First Peoples.

To help you give an authentic Acknowledgement:

- Find out the name of your local Traditional Custodians (<https://aiatsis.gov.au/whose-country> can help)
- Try to write your own Acknowledgement that is tailored to your area. Use it as an opportunity to educate and inform the congregation/group. The example we have provided below is an excellent starting point.
- Be genuine and enthusiastic
- Use correct terminology (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, First Nations Peoples and First Australians are acceptable)

Additionally, NATSICC would like to recommend that Parishes consider the following forms of Acknowledgement:

- Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Country on which the Parish stands in a physical form (signage, plaque) on Parish grounds
- Provide an Acknowledgement to the Traditional Custodians in Mass booklets, websites and other media produced by the Parish
- An Acknowledgement or Welcome to Country before every Mass and meeting or, at minimum, on significant days
- Use Traditional place name for your location

An example of an Acknowledgement of Country:

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

An excellent guide to providing a meaningful and engaging Acknowledgment of Country can be found at https://youtu.be/zxo18_7BDt4 or search 'Shelley Reys Tedx Sydney'

A **'Welcome to Country'** Ceremony is an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, where Traditional Custodians (Elders) welcome people to their land. It is a formal process that has been practiced for thousands of years and varies according to the region and practice of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

During a Welcome to Country, the Traditional Custodians welcome those in attendance, guests, staff, and students to their Country. It can take the form of a simple speech or a performance, such as a song, traditional dance, or didgeridoo piece. This Ceremony is a significant recognition of the connection to the land and is often considered a right and not a privilege.

It is important to note that a Welcome to Country should always occur at the beginning of an event, preferably as the first item. If you need assistance in implementing a Welcome to Country, NATSICC is happy to help. Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Ministries also provide a great resource to Parishes, as they work hard in the Community.

As part of the planning process, we strongly advise that you meet with the Elder/s that you have asked to perform the Welcome to Country to discuss expectations and logistics. Get a feel for what the Welcome entails and be sure that you are both comfortable with the Ceremony and context. Discuss any materials that may be needed and be mindful of smoke detectors/alarms if a Smoking Ceremony is to be incorporated into the Welcome.

For more detailed information and suggestions on wording, please visit <http://natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html>. By acknowledging and respecting the traditions and customs of Australia's First Peoples, we can work towards reconciliation and a better understanding of our shared history.



HYMNS, READINGS AND PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Readings

First Reading – Second Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16a

Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 89: 2-3, 16-17, 18-19

Second Reading – Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11

Alleluia – First Peter 2: 9

Gospel – Matthew 10: 37-42

Hymns

Entrance

We Are Called (AOV 60)

Prep. Of Gifts

Lord, to whom shall we go? (AOV 6)

Quiet Didgeridoo Music (available at www.natsicc.org.au)

Communion

The Fullness of God (AOV 62)

Bless the Lord (AOV 142)

Recessional

Christ Be Our Light (AOV 2:3)

Prayers of the Faithful

We pray for the Church, Pope Francis, Bishops and all Clergy, the Religious and laity throughout the world. That we will answer our Baptismal call to serve Christ in all peoples and in creation.

We pray for wisdom for leaders of governments and those in authority across the world. That they may promote peace and justice amongst their own people and their neighbours.

Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for families in Australia. That they will speak the truth and bring unity, protection, right relationships; be given meaningful work and love God and one another.

Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all Indigenous peoples who are experiencing loss of identity, displacement and generational trauma from the effects of colonisation. We especially ask that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non Aboriginal Australians work together for restoration, justice and healing in Christ's name.

Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray God's will in the upcoming Referendum for the Voice to Parliament in Australia. We pray for an openness in each of us to the leading, guiding and prompting of the Holy Spirit in our deliberations and peace in the outcome.

Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all the youth of the world, those in our nation and in our communities. We pray that God will bring people into their lives that help build up their faith in Christ and strong characters to follow the calling God has for them in their lives.

Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for the poor, sick, hungry, people of the world.

We remember especially those who have been affected by war, trauma, addictions and natural disasters that they will experience God's unconditional love, salvation and healing.

Lord, hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.



LITURGICAL RESOURCES - ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CONGREGATIONS

It is a privilege to acknowledge and embrace the richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in the Church's Liturgy. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples are part of the celebrating assembly, incorporating elements of their culture can enhance the spiritual experience for all members.

To ensure that the inclusion of these cultural elements align with the Liturgical norms of the Roman Missal, it is highly recommended to work closely with the Parish Priest and Liturgical team. By doing so, we can ensure that the suggestions are respectful and appropriate, and that they contribute to a meaningful and inclusive Liturgy for everyone involved.

LANGUAGE

Language is a cultural element that is closely linked with identity and pride in oneself and one's culture. This year is an excellent opportunity to bring the gift of culture into the Mass by including local Language speakers to participate in elements of the Mass.

Careful consideration needs to be given to determine which elements in the language of the people can be properly introduced into Liturgical celebrations. The suggestions below would be most appropriate to congregations where Traditional Languages are predominantly used.

In other congregations, perhaps a word or phrase in local Language could be included with the permission of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers.

How Language can be used:

- * The readings can be read in Language from a recognised Scripture translation.
- * One or more of the Prayers of the Faithful can be in Language – as above.
- * Hymn verses can be translated into Language as appropriate/possible

INTRODUCTION

Use the Welcome to Country guide available at <http://natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html> to determine whether a Welcome to Country or an Acknowledgement of Country is appropriate.

SMOKING CEREMONY

An Elder could Smoke the Community and the precious objects – altar, place of the Word, Cross – at the beginning of the Mass.

A RITE OF WATER BLESSING

Loving Lord, make us feel Your invitation to 'come to the water'. At the very beginning You blessed the water, Your great gift to us. We now ask You to bless this water and to renew us by Your grace. Water to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is always a sign of Your peace and fulfilment in everything that is good; the promise of food, of Your love, and protection, and Your power to love one another as true Christians. Lord, this truly is a sign of the new life in Christ, which in Baptism we have all received. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL PROCESSION

In the spirit of our ancestors the Message Stick can be carried forward with the Gospel Book. Other symbols and actions are used according to local practice. Traditional dance and instruments may also accompany a procession of the Word.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

These could be prepared by the Community prior to Mass or prayed spontaneously during Mass. Alternatively, you can use the suggestions provided.

PREPARATION OF GIFTS

The bread to be used for Consecration might be carried to the altar in a coolamon.

Other gifts such as a boomerang, woomera, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander painting, clap sticks might be presented. Gifts of food etc. to share with others might also be presented and are intended to be given to the poor; they would not be returned to the giver but shared with others.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER OPTIONS

Masses for Reconciliation, or one of the Eucharistic Prayers for Use in Masses for Various Needs [see Roman Missal (2010) pp. 804ff.] may be used. The Aboriginal Our Father may be also be used.

ABORIGINAL OUR FATHER

Diocese of Broome has granted permission for use of this prayer if it is used, as is, unchanged.

You are our Father, You live in heaven,
We talk to You. Father You are good.

You are our Father, You live in heaven,
We talk to You. Father You are good.

We believe your Word, Father,
We are Your children, give us bread today.

We believe Your Word, Father,
We are Your children, give us bread today.

We have done wrong, we are sorry,
Teach us, Father, all about Your Word.

We have done wrong, we are sorry,
Teach us, Father, all about Your Word.

Others have done wrong to us,
And we are sorry for them, Father, today.

Others have done wrong to us,
And we are sorry for them, Father, today.

Stop us from doing wrong, Father,
Save us all from the evil one.

Stop us from doing wrong, Father,
Save us all from the Evil One.

(Repeat first verse)

MUSIC / SONG / DANCE

Music and singing, which expresses the soul of the people, have pride of place in the Liturgy. Music forms melodies and musical instruments could be used in divine worship if they are suitable or can be made suitable, for sacred use, and provided they are in accord with the dignity of the place of worship and truly contribute to the uplifting of the faithful.

* Didgeridoo and clapsticks can accompany the choir.

* Didgeridoo and clapsticks together with other instruments can be used for reflective music.

* A Hymn can be sung in language. If a stanza of a hymn is translated it should be able to be used at an appropriate time in the Liturgy.

* Dance can be incorporated into the liturgy, especially as a procession – Entrance, The Word, and Gifts.

* Use Clapsticks rather than bells at the Consecration.

ACTIONS

The gestures and postures of the assembly are signs of its unity and express its active participation and foster the spiritual attitude of the participants.

LITURGICAL RESOURCES – NON ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CONGREGATIONS



Although there are over 135,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics in Australia, they may not be present in your Parish. Consider these suggestions to honour and include them in the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, and to keep them in your thoughts and prayers on this day.

INVITE A TRADITIONAL CUSTODIAN TO PROVIDE A WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Healing is made real when people come together. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is an opportunity to make contact with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and invite them to provide a Welcome, or participate in ways outlined in this resource.

CONDUCT AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Use the Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country guide available at <http://www.natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html>

CONNECTING WITH YOUR LOCAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY

To enhance your Liturgy, and to avail your parishioners of the gifts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, NATSICC suggests that you involve your local Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Ministry (AICM) in planning your celebration.

Visit 'About NATSICC' at www.natsicc.org.au and click on your State or Territory to find your local AICM.

These Ministries work very hard to serve local Indigenous Catholics and do a lot of good in the Community. You may be able to work together in preparing the Liturgy, sourcing speakers or presenters or learning more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics in your area and ultimately build a relationship that will benefit the Parish.

CELEBRANT INTRODUCTION

Today, on the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time, we join the Australian Bishops and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council in celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. As Australians, we are fortunate to share our home with the world's oldest continuing culture.

On this day, we honor and acknowledge God's presence in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, who have upheld their rich and diverse cultural traditions for thousands of years. We give thanks for the deep and enduring legacy of these ancient peoples and their contributions to our Continent.

Let us also take a moment to recognize and appreciate the land on which our Parish is situated and the people who have nurtured it over time. Together, let us continue to cultivate a spirit of unity and respect for all cultures and traditions within our community.

RITE FOR BLESSING AND SPRINKLING OF WATER

May be used in place of the Penitential Act on this day (appendix 2 Roman Missal)

PRIEST: Dear sisters and brothers, let us ask our ever-living God to bless this gift of creation, this living water, that has nourished people of this land since the Dreaming and will now be sprinkled on us as a memorial of our Baptism.

May God bless us with the grace to remain faithful to the Spirit we have received. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MUSIC

Prior to Mass, during the arrival of the Priest or during the Offertory Procession, a recording of instrumental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (didgeridoo, clapsticks) might be played. We have made some music available at www.natsicc.org.au

GIFTS PROCESSION

Besides bread and water for the Eucharist, gifts of food or a special collection could be brought forward for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in need.

Additionally, a coolamon could be placed in front of the altar as a symbol of the absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters at the table.

EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation II

AUDIO AND VISUAL

- Display a Powerpoint prepared by NATSICC before Mass (Available at www.natsicc.org.au)
- Ask local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students to create artworks to celebrate the day and have them present their work in the Parish (or display)
- Display Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artwork in the Church during Mass and in the leadup to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday.
- Use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designed cloth on the Altar. This is a powerful symbol of the presence of First Nations Peoples, both physically and Spiritually in Australia.
- The Priest could wear an Indigenous designed stole and/or chasuble

HOMILY NOTES



The Second Reading from Paul to the Romans reminds us of the great gift of Baptism. When we rise out of the waters of Baptism, we rise to a new life in Christ and Death and Sin no longer has power over us. This is part of the Good News and is a great gift of God to us. To receive this gift of new life in Baptism, we need to have an encounter with God somehow. One of the best ways to encounter God is through hospitality.

Hospitality can be defined as the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.

In the readings for Mass today, we hear about the special blessings that people will get if they show hospitality to someone sent by the Lord.

In the First Reading from 2nd Kings, we hear about the extraordinary hospitality shown to the Prophet Elisha by the woman at Shunem and her husband. Elisha was travelling on Mission for the Lord and was given hospitality by this kind woman. The woman (we do not know her name - but I like to think of her as Beryl) judged Elisha to be a holy man and, after giving him food and rest on his journeys, even convinced her husband to build a small room in the roof that Elisha could stay in when he came past that way. Because of her hospitality, she encountered God through Elisha. The woman was rewarded for her kindness towards the Prophet with what she wanted most but didn't have - a child. Her life was changed.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells his Apostles that he wants 100% commitment from them. Jesus wants people to encounter Him in His followers so their lives may be changed. He tells the Apostles that anyone who is hospitable to them is hospitable to Him. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who is hospitable to a Prophet, Holy Man, or the least of His Disciples because he is one of His followers will be rewarded. We know that being rewarded by Jesus would be life-changing.

Culture is very important when it comes to hospitality. In the cultures of the Middle East it was considered a duty to be hospitable to the traveller that comes by. This was (and is)

especially true of the nomadic peoples who lived in arid and inhospitable areas. It was expected that, if a stranger was judged to come in peace, they would be welcomed into the tent and be provided sustenance and protection by the tribe or family.

With these Cultural practices, it was easy for God to teach people the importance of encountering God by being especially hospitable to those sent by God as His messengers. Special rewards, physical and spiritual, and no doubt, life-changing will be bestowed on them for their kindness.

In the Culture of most First Nations Peoples in Australia, hospitality is also very important. When someone is "Welcomed to Country," the Elder or Elders judge that the stranger comes in peace and is given permission to walk on the land of which they are the Traditional Custodians. The "Welcome to Country" also means that while the stranger is on the Traditional Land, the Custodians will give sustenance and protection if needed.

Nearly all of my ministry to the Aboriginal people of my Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes starts with hospitality. I get 'Welcomed to Country'. If I am assessed as a friend and not a foe, I get into conversations in the street, then I can get invited into a person's front yard for a yarn, and then later on, I might be invited to talk on the verandah, and if I am privileged, I get invited into the home. The receiver of the hospitality must respect and acknowledge the hospitality that is given. Then trust is established, and with trust comes encounter, and in some cases, the Holy Spirit works through me, the gift of new life in Baptism is asked and received, and a life is changed.

I think all of us in the Church could learn a lot from the culture of hospitality of our First Nations Peoples in helping bring people closer to God. Respect, patience, building trust, protecting those in our care, invitation and welcome are all facets of hospitality and, as such, are very important in bringing about an encounter with God.

Most Rev. Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE,
Bishop of Wilcannia-Forbes



Photo: Bishop Columba Macbeth Green.



OTHER WAYS TO CELEBRATE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY



- Research and share the stories of the Traditional Custodians of your area. <https://aiatsis.gov.au> has an interactive map to help you discover your Traditional Custodians. You could also google your area + 'Traditional Custodians' or search your local Government website.
- Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from other Faith Traditions to your celebration.
- Visit <https://www.naidoc.org.au> and see what events are taking place in your area.
- Display the NATSICC Poster prominently.
- Display the Traditional place name of your location physically on signage, Mass booklets, newsletters and/or digitally (PowerPoint presentations, websites)
As an example:
St David's Parish
Kaurna Country | Burnside, South Australia
- Organize a community event to celebrate First Nations culture, such as a cultural festival, art exhibition, or food fair.
- Partner with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to learn about their traditions and customs, and work together on community projects.
- Hold a fundraiser for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander charity or organisation
- Create a prayer or reflection space dedicated to First Australian spirituality, with symbols, artwork, and literature that reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditions.

Remember to always consult and work with local First Nations communities and organizations when planning events and activities, and to ensure that they are respectful and culturally appropriate.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE REFERENDUM

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS

As Christians, we are invited into a new life in Christ. [The Uluru Statement From the Heart](#) similarly invites us to live and journey together in hope.¹ This short reflection considers how Catholic Social Teachings (CSTs) might help us along the way. Following Jesus's example, at this time in our shared history, as at other key moments in our reconciliation journey, our first step is to recognise one another's human dignity.

Human Dignity is a God-given "quality of being human, independent of ethnicity, creed, gender, sexuality, age or ability". It affirms the Christian "belief that every person is made in the image of God and is intrinsically valuable and worthy of respect, simply because they are human".²

Learning about the Country, Culture, Language and everyday realities of First Nations Peoples where you live is one step towards seeing, affirming and celebrating the human dignity of First Australians. Considering all points of view ahead of the referendum "to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice"³ is another.

Subsidiarity builds on the idea that people and groups have the right to participate in decisions affecting them. More than just promoting **participation**, it means that when people and groups can't meet their own needs, other parts of society (e.g. the Government) act according to their duty to assist with resources and support.

The proposal to amend the Constitution to recognise Australia's First Nations Peoples, including through the Voice, is an example of this CST in action. As the [National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council \(NATSICC\)](#) explains, "Your support of our voices on important issues helps to make Subsidiarity a reality."⁴

The Common Good underpins our life together. It helps ensure people realise their full potential as individuals and communities. More than just sharing what we have, the common good is "what happens when individual rights to personal possessions and community resources are balanced with our collective responsibility to meet the needs of others."⁵

When we consider the common good, we accept our collective responsibility to 'close the gap', that is, to see and meet the needs of First Nations Peoples who experience inequity and other injustices, including homelessness, poverty and incarceration, at disproportionate rates.⁶

Solidarity is relational. By definition, it's "a firm and persevering commitment to the common good, which reminds us that everything is related... It's a way of saying, 'I'm here with you.'⁷ When we practice solidarity, we act in ways that accompany others in their own life

experiences. Learning about First Nations Peoples' challenges and joining them as they campaign for justice is one example.

Solidarity also reminds us that we are much stronger and better when we are together. It compels us to lift one another up. The Referendum on the Voice is an opportunity to listen to First Australians and come together as one, united by mutual respect and compassion.

Care for Our Common Home helps us preserve creation for future generations. "A way of appreciating the earth, not as a commodity but as a sacred space, a gift from God". Care for our common home is "an approach to looking after God's creation by 'tilling' (cultivating or working) and 'keeping' (caring, protecting and preserving) it".⁸

Learning from First Nations Peoples' wisdom is important to reconciliation. If enshrined in Law, the Voice to Parliament could be a mechanism for First Australians to share their knowledge on caring for the environment in more strategic and coordinated ways that benefit all, for example, by offering advice on such things as sustainable land management methods.

Preferential Option for the Poor is demonstrated by the "act of prioritising the needs of the poor over the desires of the rich, the rights of workers over profits and the preservation of the environment over its exploitation".⁹

Amending the Constitution is a way of responding in love to the unjust circumstances in which First Nations Australians live. Fr Frank Brennan challenges Catholics to, "Know your history; know the Aboriginal history."¹⁰ He emphasises that First Australians belong in our Country's collective story and in the law that guides our common life. This change needs to be a matter of priority.

QUESTIONS

- How do Catholic Social Teachings shape your experience and expression of faith?
- Noel Pearson explains that, due to the ongoing injustice they experience, many First Nations people feel "unloved" by their fellow Australians.¹¹ Following Jesus's commandment "to love one another", how do you, your household and community show love for First Nations Australian people?
- How could the activities of truth-telling and agreement-making help address the inequity and other injustice experienced by First Nations Peoples in Australia?

- Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann offers the concept of Dadirri or deep listening as a practice that can help us along our journey of reconciliation.¹² Reflect on the sounds and voices you are listening to. Do they resonate with CST principles? Are there other, different voices you are yet to hear?
- Stan Grant emphasises the need for compassion in our conversations about the Voice to Parliament.¹³ How will you demonstrate compassion in your interactions with others (including with differing views) about the Voice and related matters of justice for First Nations Peoples?

PRAYER

Creator,
You beautifully, wonderfully make us.
May we go your way of love.

Christ,
You lead us to reconciliation.
May we go your way of justice.

Spirit,
You move us on the journey.
May we go your way of breath.

Amen

Written by Dr Rebekah Pryor (Caritas Australia) with Craig Arthur (NATSICC)

1. The Uluru Statement From the Heart, <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement/>
2. Caritas Australia, Catholic Social Teachings Card Set, 2022.
3. Prime Minister of Australia, Media Release, March 23, 2023 <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/next-step-towards-voice-referendum-constitutional-alteration-bill>
4. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) <https://www.natsicc.org.au/first-nations-voices-on.html>
5. Caritas Australia, Catholic Social Teachings Card Set, 2022.
6. Closing the Gap, "Closing the Gap Targets and Outcomes," <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>
7. Caritas Australia, Catholic Social Teachings Card Set, 2022.
8. Caritas Australia, Catholic Social Teachings Card Set, 2022.
9. Caritas Australia, Catholic Social Teachings Card Set, 2022.
10. Frank Brennan, "Fr Frank Brennan SJ: How to Vote on the Voice," The Catholic Weekly, March 17, 2023 <https://www.catholicweekly.com.au/fr-frank-brennan-sj-how-to-vote-on-the-voice/>
11. For example, listen to the first of First Nations leader, lawyer, academic and activist Noel Pearson's four ABC Boyer Lectures, "Who we were, who we are, and who we can be," November 4, 2022 <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/boyerlectures/who-we-were-who-we-are-and-who-we-can-be/14095284>. See also Wiradjuri academic, journalist and presenter.
12. See Miriam Rose Foundation, YouTube, "Dadirri (Official Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Video): 3 minute promo," https://youtu.be/tow2tR_ezL8.
13. Stan Grant, "As we debate the Indigenous Voice to Parliament there is one word mission: Compassion," February 5, 2023 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-02-05/voice-to-parliament-debate-stan-grant-compassion-is-needed/101928250>



YOUTH ACTIVITIES

The Voice to Parliament Referendum and other steps on the Reconciliation journey

The 2023 theme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is 'A New Life in Christ'. It relates to the transformative possibilities that come when we walk God's Way of love. At this time in Australia's Reconciliation journey, we see signs of new life – the Uluru Statement's invitation to walk together "for a better future" is being taken up and its call to join in listening, truth-telling and agreement making is growing louder.

When we encourage young people to join us on the journey, we do so knowing that they bring unique perspectives, ideas and energy that will benefit us all, now and for future generations. The activities that follow aim to celebrate and make space for their insights as they learn about the Voice to Parliament Referendum and other steps on Australia's Reconciliation journey.

Learning to listen to First Nations people tell their stories is important to understanding the truth about their lives, histories and hopes for the future. While there are common themes, particularly concerning the injustices First Nations Peoples

have faced and continue to face, their stories are as unique as their Language and Cultures. So, as you lead these youth activities, be encouraged to draw in First Nations stories shared by local Traditional Custodian groups or other accounts from reliable sources.

Learning Objectives

The specific objective is to help youth learn about the Voice to Parliament Referendum and its potential impact, as well as other steps that promote and enable Reconciliation.

The activities described below are designed for use with young people in school, parish and other group settings. They link to the Australian Curriculum, particularly the cross-curriculum priority of [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures](#) and the general capabilities of [Critical and Creative Thinking](#), [Ethical Understanding](#), [Intercultural Understanding](#) and [Personal and Social Capability](#) (available at <https://v9.australiancurriculum.edu.au/teacher-resources>). They also incorporate Catholic Social Teachings (CSTs) on justice and political participation, particularly the principle of Subsidiarity.

For more activities, including a listening meditation based on Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann's words about Dadirri (deep listening), visit www.indigenousvoice.church.

Setting the Space

Create a sacred space that provides a focus for learning and contemplation. Incorporate visual and liturgical elements that will help young people make connections with ideas like Spirituality, Faith, Culture, Community and Ecology. Taking inspiration from the theme, 'A New Life in Christ', include candles, water, gum leaves, rocks, seeds, branches or bark as well as First Nations artwork and music.

Activity Materials

- Resources on the Voice to Parliament Referendum, such as news articles, official Government documents and opinion pieces
- Papal Encyclicals that address the importance of political engagement and the CST principle of Subsidiarity, such as Pope Francis' Laudato Si' and Pope Benedict XVI's Caritas in Veritate
- Writing materials

Activity 1: Research and Reflection

Introduce students to the [Voice to Parliament referendum \(https://voice.niaa.gov.au/\)](https://voice.niaa.gov.au/). Also, deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teachings on justice and political participation, particularly the principle of Subsidiarity, with [Caritas Australia's CST Toolkit \(https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/cst-toolkit/\)](https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/cst-toolkit/).

Have students research and gather information about the Referendum and its potential outcomes and impacts. After a time, use a whiteboard, Google Doc or an app like www.mentimeter.com to collate and record the group's findings. Next, invite students to reflect on how their Catholic faith shapes their views on the Referendum, particularly in light of the Principle of Subsidiarity. Have each student write a poem or one-page reflection paper on the topic. Alternatively, if time and facilities allow, they could create a minute-long short film or 5-slide presentation on the topic. Encourage them to keep the CST of Subsidiarity front-of-mind as they complete the activity.

Once these reflections are complete, invite students to share their reflections and learn from one another.

Activity 2: Debate

Introduce students to the [Voice to Parliament referendum \(https://voice.niaa.gov.au/\)](https://voice.niaa.gov.au/) and its potential outcomes and impacts. (Use and build on any learning generated from the previous activity, if done.) Divide students into two or more teams to simulate a debate on the Referendum. Assign each team a different position, such as arguing in favour of the amendments proposed by the Referendum or against it. As they develop arguments in support of their assigned position, encourage students to read the [referendum question and proposed change to the constitution \(https://voice.niaa.gov.au/news/constitutional-amendment-and-referendum-question-announced\)](https://voice.niaa.gov.au/news/constitutional-amendment-and-referendum-question-announced) closely.

Hold the debate by getting students to take turns presenting their arguments and responding to their opponents' arguments. Set a time limit of, say, 3 or 5 minutes for each speaker. Remind students of the Catholic Social Teaching principle of Subsidiarity throughout the debate.

After the debate, facilitate a group discussion encouraging students to reflect on the arguments of both sides and consider how their participation in the political process aligns with their Catholic faith and values.

Activity 3: Community Action

Remind students of the Catholic Social Teaching Principle of Subsidiarity, which emphasises the importance of decision-making at the local level. Brainstorm community actions that are grounded in this principle, such as advocating for greater representation for their local community in the political process. Facilitate a discussion that encourages students to share and reflect on their experiences of taking action. Ask: How did it feel? What difference did it make? Encourage them to consider how their Catholic faith inspires and challenges them to be active and engaged citizens. Also encourage them to learn about the social justice issues and challenges faced by First Nations people and others in their particular area, and ask: 'How might I act in solidarity with my neighbours?'

Written by Craig Arthur (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council) and Dr Rebekah Pryor (Caritas Australia)



One Journey, Together

This year, Australians will be asked to cast a vote on the proposed alteration to the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. Like all Australians, Catholics have an important role to play in the upcoming Referendum.

The tradition of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) well-equips Catholics to make informed decisions based on their own faith and moral positions. With CST Principles in mind and in partnership with Caritas Australia and a number of other Catholic organisations, we have developed a website to host a range of resources to help you decide for or against acknowledging the world's oldest continuing cultures in our Constitution. Our hope is that, however we vote, we take this **One Journey, Together**.

So, whether you are looking for homilies and reflections by leading Catholic thinkers, interviews and statements from First Nations Community members, links to Referendum information or youth activities or answers to FAQs, learn more at www.indigenousvoice.church.

Voice Prayer

Dear Lord,

We invite all Australians to join us, their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Brothers and Sisters in prayer.

We pray for a bright and just shared future for all who call Australia home.

We ask that Your grace of acceptance and compassion will guide us.

Let the Creator Spirit lead our journey with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of this land.

May we share Your Spirit more deeply & celebrate the gifts You have given us.

Help us appreciate true harmony and peace just as our Old People did;

Keep us strong, make us resilient and remember us in this time.

Now is an opportunity to change our Nation's history for the better.

Walk with us as we write a new chapter together and

may we be one in Your love.

Amen.



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