



## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council**



**Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me  
for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest.  
Matthew 11 : 29**

## **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liturgy**

### **Liturgy Resources**

Sunday 7 July 2002

## **Message from the NATSICC Chairperson**

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest.” (Matthew 11 : 29)

The text of this year’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday speaks clearly to me of SHARING. It talks to me of how sharing always eases the burden no matter how heavy or how light. Sharing talks to me of equality, of seeing each other from levels of life as one people striving for a future direction, respectful and caring of each other and providing justice for all.

It seems a simple concept, yet one that is often so very difficult to put into everyday life and interaction. We are moving slowly towards accepting the fact that Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians have a shared history since 1788... we, as a nation, are slowly recognising the truth of that history and how it has shaped the present moment that we now live in. As Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples within the Australian Catholic Church, we are slowly learning to share our forms of worship, to include each other and to welcome each other, to seek a truly Australian base of spirituality and presence in our society.

As the Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, I invite the Catholic community across the nation, on this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday 2002, to take this text to heart and to explore ways of sharing with each other, that will enable a Church that is inclusive and welcoming of our culture and that models a just and shared future.

I encourage everyone to be creative in your liturgies, to find ways to joyfully celebrate the many gifts our Indigenous culture can offer: symbols, prayers, music, imagery or ritual. Aboriginal Catholic Ministries across the country have been working on liturgy and are available for help and guidance. My hope is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday 2002 will be a great celebration for all and a highlight in every parish.

*Vicki Walker*

***“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls”. (Mt 11:29)***

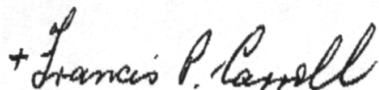
These challenging, but encouraging words of Jesus, provide the theme for **Aboriginal and Torres Islander Sunday**. Certainly, the indigenous peoples of Australia have long known what it is to carry the yoke – the yoke of dispossession and denial of culture, spirituality and basic rights.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday** is an occasion when indigenous and non-indigenous Australians can prayerfully reflect on those heavy burdens that have been imposed and resolve to do all that is possible to alleviate them and redress the injustice that has been so long suffered.

For Christians generally, and our Catholic Community in particular, this Sunday calls us to bring the unfinished business of reconciliation based on truth and justice, to the feet of Jesus. It can also be a step along the way for all in the Church towards responding to the words of Pope John Paul II in his Alice Spring message to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. “ ... ***You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not fully be the Church Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others***”.

The materials prepared by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liturgy Group, provide an invaluable resource for the proper celebration of this significant Sunday. In thanking NATSICC for this offering, I enthusiastically recommend it for use in all parishes throughout Australia.

May these resources help us all to learn from Christ and each other and grow in gentleness in humility of heart, so that we will together find rest for our souls.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Francis P. Carroll". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

**+Francis P Carroll**  
**President – Australian Catholic Bishops Conference**

## **Liturgy Team Message**

The NATSICC Liturgy team sincerely thank Archbishop Carroll, Bishop Heenan, and Vicki Walker for their contribution to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Liturgy Resources.

A National Taskforce has been formed and is inclusive of the NATSICC Liturgy Team and four members of the National Liturgical Commission. The role of this Taskforce is to address the issues and concerns as presented by the Indigenous participants in the document "Women and Man – One in Christ Jesus". Primarily the group is discussing the presentation of liturgy that is inclusive and appropriate to meeting the needs of the diversity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Catholic community groups.

### **Important Message**

**The liturgy group strongly urges that protocol and practice of local community be respected.**

Where possible it is important to invite the Local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in the preparation of liturgy to ensure that appropriate prayer, symbol and ritual is planned. This process is critical to the nurturing of the deep rooted significance of particular symbol and prayer, and respect for the sacredness of ritual and ceremony according to local community respect for practice. What is a rite in a community may not necessarily be the right of another community.

The NATSICC Team is currently working on the production of a Resource Kit that will provide information for days of celebration that is important to Indigenous people. The plan is to have this resource completed this year.

Reconciliation is critical to the healing of our Nation. The Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation has as the leading statement the following message "**We, the peoples of Australia, of many origins as we are, make a commitment to go on together in a spirit of reconciliation**". As Catholics together we are responsible for bringing together Catholic traditions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions of meaningful prayer and liturgy that gives faith and hope for unity as One in Christ.

**Robyn Albert, Lorraine Erlandson, Joan Hendriks**  
NATSICC Liturgy Team

**HOMILY NOTES**  
**Prepared by Bishop Brian Heenan**  
**Secretary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Bishops Committee**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is an invitation for all Catholic people to reflect on the place of indigenous people in the Australian nation. We are challenged to have the mind of Jesus as we seek to promote dignity and harmony among all in our land.

In the beautiful Gospel passage, Jesus is contrasting the 'learned and clever' who are the teachers of the law, the high priests and the scribes, with the 'mere children' who are the simple people, akin to the poor, the hungry, the afflicted, the non-invited, the outcasts, the marginalised. It is to this group that God has revealed his unconditional love, made visible in Jesus Christ.

Jesus' message is a warning to those with power and social status, that God's preference is for those whom the world despises. The prayer of Jesus "I thank you Father" is inviting us to do the same, to make our commitment to those who are disadvantaged, to those whose dignity is overlooked, to all who are excluded by racist attitudes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is a call to ask ourselves, "are we truly Christ-like in our attitude to reconciliation, to the rights of indigenous people and their future recognition in the Australian society?" "Does our faith make a difference when we look at our attitudes to people who are of different colour, religion or cultural background?" As a Church, are we genuinely welcoming to our indigenous sisters and brothers?

Jesus says "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest". These words must bring comfort to indigenous people who have been overburdened by sorrows since the Europeans arrived in 1788. They have lost their land, their lives and their dignity, in two hundred years of pain. Jesus acknowledges their burden and says "I will give you rest".

He goes on to say "shoulder my yoke and learn from me". Jesus is inviting all his followers to accept the crosses that come consistently, and to have the same attitude as he did, namely to call on God's strength.

Jesus uses us all to carry one another's burdens and he calls us his followers at this time, to ease the distress of our indigenous brothers and sisters. How? By supporting their call for recognition, as the original owners of this land and working personally to bring about harmony among all groups in Australia. Jesus reaches out to all people. Are we Christians ready to talk with indigenous members of our community, with people outside of our circle of friends? Are we prepared to break down barriers and promote respect?

Jesus was a humble servant of all as we heard in the reading from Zechariah "See now, your king come to you, riding on a donkey". "He will proclaim peace for all the nations". Is Jesus calling us to come down off our self built pedestals, to humbly acknowledge the goodness in every person, and work to create real peace?

## Words from the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II

***“Do you think that your gifts are worth so little that you should no longer bother to maintain them? Share them with each other and teach them to your children. Your songs, your stories, your paintings, your dances, your languages must never be lost.***

Do you perhaps remember those words that Paul VI spoke to the Aboriginal people during his visit to them in 1970? ***On that occasion he said ‘We know that you have a lifestyle proper to your own ethnic genius or culture – a culture which the Church respects and which she does not, in any way, ask you to renounce .... Society itself is enriched by the presence of different cultural and ethnic elements.***

***For us, you and the values you represent are precious. We deeply respect your dignity and reiterate our deep affection for you’.*** (Pope John Paul II)  
(“Recognition – the Way Forward” – An Issue paper from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, 1993 – page 25)

*“You are a part of Australia and Australia is a part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others”.*  
(Pope John Paul II)

Taken from the Holy Father’s address to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, delivered at Blatherskite Park, Alice Springs NT on 29 November 1986:

### **Reference reading:7**

“Ecclesia in Oceania” The Church in Oceania. 1998 Synod Document  
Section on Indigenous Peoples – Page 74, No. 28

## **Suggestions for Liturgy preparation**

### **Greeting:**

Today begins a week of celebrations across Australia for NAIDOC week. As we begin this prayerful celebration we are reminded of the deeply religious and spiritual understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Jesus wants us to understand and respect one another, to be just and compassionate people, and to be reconciled in God – to each other

### **Penitential Rite:** A Rite of Water Blessing

(It is customary in some areas, when Aboriginal people gather for important ceremonies to use water. Water containers can be a large shell or coolamon and a small branch from an appropriate native tree can be used to sprinkle the water. Please collaborate with your local Indigenous group to ensure this rite of water blessing is appropriate.

**Alternatively water can be used according to Christian tradition.**

**Reader:** Water to Aboriginal people is always a sign of your peace and fulfillment in everything that is good. The promise of food, of harmony with ourselves, and the bush around us. Make us feel your invitation to ‘come to the water’ Lord, at the very beginning you blessed water, your great gift to us, and now we ask that your blessing be

renewed in this water here today. We ask that through this water blessing we will all be renewed with 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.

We ask this through Jesus the Wise One.

**All:** Amen

## **Opening Prayer (suggestions)**

**Prayer of the Aboriginal People** (where an Indigenous reader is available)

Father of all, you gave us the Dreaming. You have spoken to us through our beliefs. You then made you love clear to us in the person of Jesus. We thank you for your care. You own us, you are our hope. Make us grow strong as we face the problems of change. We ask you to help the people of Australia to listen to us and respect our culture. Make the knowledge of you grow strong in all people, so that you can be at home in us and we can make a home for everyone in our land. Amen.

### **Alternative Prayer ( non Indigenous or Indigenous person)**

Holy Father, God of Love, You are the Creator of this land and of all good things. Our hope is in you because you gave your Son Jesus to reconcile the world to you. We pray for your strength and grace to forgive, accept and love one another, as you love us and forgive and accept us in the sacrifice of your Son.

(prepared by Wontulp Bi-Buya Indigenous Theology Working Group)

**Gospel Procession:** A message stick could be carried forward with the Gospel. There are other symbolic actions that can be used according to local tradition and need to be discussed according to local practice.(the important factor is to maintain the sacred tradition of the symbolism)

**Offertory Procession:** In some areas the coolamon is used in carry the bread to the altar. In the absence of Indigenous people participating in the celebration the coolamon can be placed on the altar as a symbol of the non presence of Indigenous brothers and sisters at the table

## **Prayers of the Faithful**

**Celebrant:** Loving God, on this day of celebration we acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia. We turn to you in prayer and seek the help of your Spirit as we commit ourselves to journeying together in a spirit of Reconciliation

**Reader:** We pray for the Church, for the grace to joyfully follow in your footsteps in humble service of you and one another. **(pause)**  
Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer

**Reader:** As we celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday today, we pray for peace and Reconciliation in our hearts, our families, our communities and throughout

the world. Help us to realise Lord, that you use us to bring about peace each time we ask and give forgiveness to one another. **(pause)**

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer.

**Reader:** Lord, Help us to be compassionate to respond to the needs of others in ways that would reveal your love and mercy especially to those who are suffering. **(pause)**

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer.

**Reader;** We ask you Lord, to guide the youth, that they may come to know and seek you, and have trust in your love and mercy. **(pause)**

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer.

We thank and praise you God for all the good things you provide for us, help us to share what you have given us. (pause)

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer.

We pray for our Elders, those who are sick, the dying, the imprisoned, the homeless, and those whose anniversaries occur at this time. We ask for your protection, healing and mercy for them, **(pause)**

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer

**Reader:** We especially pray for those who are experiencing despair and hopelessness through loss of identity and separation from family and place of belonging. Help them Lord, by your Holy Spirit, to be strong and to find love, faith, hope, peace and happiness in you. **(pause)**

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear my prayer

**Reader:** We pray for a better understanding and respect between all peoples of our country. Help us as we grow to appreciate the diversity of cultures, languages, and backgrounds. In your eyes Lord, we are one. Help us not to see colour, race or creed, but to see you Lord, in each person created by you to be accepted and loved. **(pause)**

Lord hear us

**All:** Lord hear our prayer.

### **Music (Some suggested Hymn / Songs)**

Holy Ground Mantra and Chants (Monica Brown)

Aboriginal Our Father ( with permission )      My Daughter, My Son

What a Friend We Have in Jesus                      How Great Thou Art

One Day At a Time    Amazing grace

Here I Am Lord    As Gentle As Silence

Hearts On Fire (Michael Mangan)                      Jesus the Healer (Marilla)

Peace is Flowing Like a River                              Peace Prayer of St. Francis