

NATSICC News



The Newsletter of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council - May 2013

POPE FRANCIS | JORGE MARIO BERGOGLIO

- ✝ Pope Francis I is known as a man of humble origins and rare humility.
- ✝ Originally named Jorge Mario Bergoglio, 76, the new pope is known as a doctrinal conservative and a believer in social justice.
- ✝ The Argentinian cardinal has become the first ever pope from the Americas in the history of the Church. He is also the first Jesuit pope.
- ✝ His reputation for humility has been supported by a simple lifestyle.
- ✝ In a lifetime of teaching and leading priests in Latin America, which has the largest share of the world's Catholics, the former Bergoglio has shown a keen political sensibility, according to his official biographer, Sergio Rubin.
- ✝ His personal style is the antithesis of Vatican splendour.
- ✝ As Cardinal of the Catholic Church in Argentina, he passed on the right to have a chauffeured limousine and instead used public transport.
- ✝ Instead of a bishop's palace, he lived in a small apartment.
- ✝ He also reportedly cooked his own meals.
- ✝ This was not the first time he was a papal contender.
- ✝ Vatican insiders say it was a tight fight between Bergoglio and Benedict XVI in 2005 until Bergoglio conceded.
- ✝ Jorge Bergoglio was born in 1936 in Buenos Aires, the son of an Italian railway worker.
- ✝ He joined the Jesuit Order in 1958, where he studied philosophy, literature and psychology.
- ✝ He became a priest in 1969 and graduated as a professor of theology.
- ✝ He was promoted through the ranks of the Jesuits and became Cardinal in 2001.



NATSICC welcomes Pope Francis

“We welcome the new head of the Catholic Church – Pope Francis. He leads us into what is a difficult time. It is apt that he has taken the name of St. Francis of Assisi, a man who lived the way many of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters do today – simply and in poverty “ said Thelma Parker, Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC).

As the new Pope has a proven record on matters of social

justice we are confident that he will embrace the words of Pope John Paul II :

“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.”

“Indigenous Australian Catholics should be heartened that he has been willing to challenge powerful interests

Continued over page....



A moment to reflect

Aboriginal experience of the land is a place of revelation for the rest of us Australians. We late comers have an ambiguous relationship to the land. We are attracted by its beauty and its mystery, and know that in some what we have begun to belong to it; but we have still to learn how to relate to it. The country is exploited, but not respected. We fear it at times, but seldom feel responsible for it.

Aboriginals have a gift to give other Australians, the experience and knowledge that the Spirit of God can be encountered in this landscape. The land is a place of mystery, a place of silence, a place of meeting.

Aboriginal experience and culture can mediate the meaning of land to other Australians, and enable it to be recognised as a revelatory symbol. The fact cannot be a matter of indifference to Australian Christians, rather, I believe, it is a matter of great urgency, a matter of listening to the way God wants to communicate with us, a matter of obedience.

It seems to me that this calls non-Aboriginal Australians to a reversal of common cultural assumptions. We newcomers would then come before Aboriginal people not as experts with all the answers, but as learners about this land. We non-Aboriginal Christians would see ourselves as apprentices in faith to Aboriginal people who know how to listen to the Spirit of god in this land. This concept of 'apprenticeship' implies a fundamental attitude of respect before those who can teach us the mystery that is revealed to those that have ears to hear and eyes to see in this South land of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean a false romanticising of Aboriginals or Aboriginal culture. It does mean recognising that Aboriginal perceptions if the land are a way, I would believe central way, towards the development of a genuine spirituality for all Australians.

It seems to be that to bypass this tuition is to ignore the revelatory pattern of the Spirit. If the Land itself is to become a place of encounter with mystery, then non Aboriginal Christians must learn to learn from Aboriginal guides.

Fr Denis Edwards .
in Malone (ed.) *Discovering an Australian Theology* (Homebush, NSW: St Paul Publications, 1988 (89-102).

NATSICC welcomes Pope Francis cont.....

and is deeply concerned about the social injustices in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America. The fact that the Cardinals have elected the first non European Pope in 1300 years shows us that the heart of the Catholic Church has moved from the Northern Hemisphere to the South and promises a newness in direction and perhaps spirituality." Thelma said.

"He faces many challenges in this modern age,

important amongst them the terrible issue of sexual abuse and his pastoral background will be an enormous assistance in building a better future for those in need."

NATSICC prays that Pope Francis will "open the windows" into the Church in such a way to offer even greater hope to the various cultural groups in the world who are struggling for recognition in an unjust world.

Let's Reconnect!

Send your email address to assembly@natsicc.org.au or call 08 8363 2963



Message from the Chair

This May edition of the NATSICC News is the first 'printed' Newsletter for the new NATSICC Council.

Whilst we produce online versions, we feel it is important to continue to serve our people that are in remote areas and who do not have regular access to computers or smart phones.

We welcome new councillors from NSW (Ann Weldon), Victoria (Margrett Gilson) and a new youth councillor - Mitch Firth. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge, experience and energy and will be great additions to the council.

We have just celebrated the special time of Easter, a time of renewal and growth. It is with this motivation and spiritual strength that we move forward into the year.

The NATSICC Liturgy committee are working hard on this year's Liturgy Resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. I can let you know that the theme chosen for the 2nd Sunday in July is "Peace and Mercy for all".

The new Council has placed a strong focus on Inculturation of the Liturgy and this is reflected in the NATSICC Strategic Plan (downloadable at the NATSICC Website - Resources section).

Yours in Unity,
Thelma Parker

Aboriginal Young People Celebrate the Spirit ...

Stand tall, stand proud, stand strong, stand still ... and know yourself always

Joyously celebrate the fruits and gifts of the Spirit

Bear the determination of the spirit of our people in your voice with passion

Love one another and spread the message of Gods peace and love

Share the spiritual richness of our ancestors with all others

Faithfully carry the Aboriginal Message Stick with pride and honour

So dreams and hopes will be guided and fulfilled by the Creator Spirit
and so ...

Rejuvenate young Aboriginal ambassadors and leaders ... and

Celebrate the Spirit

1 Timothy 3: 1-7

Copyright NATSICC 2008

Melissa Brickell 2008

2012 - 2015 NATSICC Council



The 2012 - 2015 NATSICC Council elected the new executive at their December 2012 face to face meeting in Sydney. The council welcomed Ann Weldon (NSW), Mitch Firth (Youth Councillor) and Margrett Gilson (Vic) onto the council.

The 2012 - 2015 NATSICC Council consists of:

Thelma Parker (Qld) - Chairperson
Mitch Firth (Youth Councillor) - Secretary (*pictured left*)
Margrett Gilson (Vic)
Ann Weldon (NSW)
Cathie Wilson (NT)
Shirley Quaresimin (WA)
Jaimi Lee Armstrong (Tas) - Treasurer
Dolly McGaughey (Torres Strait)
John Lochowiak (SA) - Deputy Chairperson

Thelma Parker was re-elected for her second term of NATSICC Chairperson. John Lochowiak was also re-elected into the Deputy Chair position. Jaimi Lee Armstrong accepted the role of Treasurer and Mitch Firth fills the Secretary Role.



Councillor in profile

Margrett Gilson - Victoria

Margrett Gilson was born Muljudi Yuri of the Woorawa Clann - Waka Waka Nation. She is the eldest of 14 Children to Vincent and Marjorie Law at Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement. Raised and educated at Cherbourg State School in the 40's and Murgon High School in the 50's, Margrett became a school teacher and taught many primary and secondary schools in Qld, NSW and Vic.

She has attained many educational degrees during her lifetime and has written curriculum documents, policy documents and completed national reports for Government. Margrett has raised 2 children, has 5 grandchildren is married to an ex serviceman and is still teaching and working with youth, scouts, ACM, council and local organisations.

There is a shift in governmental policy to raise the preservation and retirement age for superannuation access in line with the increasing life expectancy in the Australian population. However, this is not representative of the Indigenous community who can expect to live 10 years less than non Indigenous people. Combined with the increased financial stress suffered by Indigenous people, the argument for lowering the 'preservation age' for Indigenous people grows stronger. As is detailed below, other options exist in making Superannuation more relevant to Indigenous people and they should be explored. Put simply, raising the 'preservation age' will mean that less Indigenous people will live long enough to access their funds.

NATSICC was very pleased to accept Catholic Super's offer of Gold Sponsorship of the 2012 NATSICC Assembly in Melbourne because the issue remains unresolved for Indigenous workers. The decreased life expectancy of Indigenous people combined with the complex nature of family structures in Indigenous families make the issues of correct beneficiaries and respecting the deceased's last Will and Testament an important issue. The issue itself is prevalent in the Superannuation industry as a whole, contributing up to a third of all complaints to the Superannuation complaint tribunal.

Superannuation has become an issue as more and more Indigenous people attain self determination and are gaining employment in 'official' positions that demand employer contributions. NATSICC believes that education is a very important facet of Indigenous people accessing and understanding their Superannuation. Statistics show us that indigenous people spend a shorter amount of time in each job (for many reasons including short contracts, casual employment and other factors) and are more likely to have several positions over a working lifetime.

The result is often small amounts of superannuation spread across several different funds. Australian Tax Office research discovered that better educational and consultative processes are required to encourage Indigenous Australians to utilise services such as Super

Seeker (the Government's unclaimed super web site).

The repercussions of early release of superannuation are complex and far reaching for everyone, including Indigenous people. There have been calls for superannuation to become available to victims of domestic violence. NATSICC argues that the social security frame work should provide urgent and immediate assistance.

Superannuation may then be of use in funding long term improvement in the lives of those suffering domestic violence rather than satisfy acute/short term needs.

“the argument for lowering the ‘preservation age’ for Indigenous people grows” stronger.”

Determining if Superannuation becomes available at an earlier date is only part of a required rethink on 'future proofing' future generations through adequate Superannuation.

There are currently extenuating circumstances that can facilitate the early release of Superannuation. NATSICC is of the opinion that these regulations have the scope to be more individualised and take into account a person's health, life expectancy and circumstance.

Indigenous and non Indigenous Public Service staff with relevant experience should be involved in assessing early release of superannuation. Additionally, the Superannuation Industry should be provided with targeted training in relation to the issues that Indigenous people face.

Additionally, the Government should be utilising existing public funding avenues to improve the living conditions, health, education and the employment rate of Indigenous people rather than Indigenous people having to take percentages of their own funds and jeopardising their future living capacity.



superannuation and Indigenous workers

NATSICC SECRETARIAT

80 PAYNEHAM RD. STEPNEY SA 5069 | 08 8363 2936 | craig@natsicc.org.au

5th Anniversary of the Federal Apology to Stolen generations



NATSICC were successful in obtaining a micro grant from the Healing Foundation to hold an event celebrating the Fifth Anniversary of the Federal Apology to Stolen Generations.

The event was held at the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Adelaide and was hosted by NATSICC Deputy Chair John Lochwiak.

The group watched the Apology by Kevin Rudd and then had the opportunity to discuss and remember that special, long awaited day. One person present likened it to the day man landed on the moon. "You can always remember where you were when it happened" she said.

"Kevin Rudd spoke at the Sorry day breakfast and explained that he was still writing the speech 30 minutes before he was due to go on. That's how important it was to him to get it right" said John Lochowiak.

It was a time for the 30 attendees to share stories and discuss the impact that forced removal of children had on Indigenous families. Several participants decided to share their hurt and long term grief for the first time.

The group was blessed to be present at the workshop. "I am glad that people felt comfortable enough to share their experiences. It was a good opportunity to revisit the Apology by Kevin Rudd and remind ourselves that we still have a long way to go" said ACM Pastoral Worker Michael Sostaric.

Following the Apology in 2008, Mick Dodson remarked "I am inspired by this apology as an act of true reconciliation towards Indigenous Australia. It allows us to move forward with honesty, an acceptance of shame about parts of our history and with courage, pride, maturity and hope."

It is with pride, maturity and hope they we will continue to champion the cause of reconciliation and ensure that Indigenous people receive their rightful place in not only the Catholic Church, but Australian society.

The opportunity to share is an important part of the healing process. Many thanks to the Healing Foundation for funding the event.

Sonny Flynn Passes

Much loved and respected Elder, Sonny Flynn passed away peacefully on March 18 2013. A member of the inaugural working party that formed NATSICC in 1989, Sonny was a councillor up until 1997. Our sympathies extend to his family.

The following excerpts have been taken from the eulogies presented by family at his funeral.

" In the early days Sonny was the Chief Altar Boy, Messenger, Bishop's fishing companion and also had time to answer the door/telephone before advising the Bishop, Priest or Brother.

Twenty one years ago Father Pat Mullins approached Sonny to establish an Aboriginal Catholic Community in Darwin, which resulted in the Top End Aboriginal Catholic Association (TEACA) and then became St Martin de Pores.

Aunty Dot Fox

I will never forget the day that my mother passed away back in 2007. All us daughters were gathered around her hospital bed and my father, who had been uncharacteristically quiet, started to speak.

His words that day were nothing short of profound. He spoke of love, of coming together at a time of great sadness, he brought our attention out of the moment and toward the future, reminding us of our duties as a family who had just lost its great matriarch, of how to treat one another and conduct ourselves in the face of great adversity.

My father led us as a family that day in prayer, asking us to join hands and bow our heads as he said a prayer for our family. He was charismatic, heartfelt, sincere and demonstrated a great sense of justice, power and love - and even though his physical state and mind deteriorated greatly as the years wore on from that day I will always remember him thus, as a great leader of our family and also a great leader of our people, because that is exactly what he was.

Elizabeth Flynn (Daughter)

He worked hard to promote to local people the importance of study for Indigenous People encouraging them to study things like Business Management, Community Development, Social Work and even for students to study at the Whyalla Campus of SAIT to produce indigenous teachers. I would be remiss to say that his legacy to us here today was that there was no such thing as going back.

Brenda Williams (Neice)

In addition to education for Aboriginal people, my father continued to live a staunchly Catholic life and further advanced the participation of Aboriginal people in their own Catholic faith. He was instrumental in starting up Top End Catholic Aboriginal Corporation (TECA) at St Martin De Pores, the Otherway Centre Aboriginal Catholic Church in Adelaide, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council and was involved in the World Council of Churches and the Australian Council of Churches.

Even in our grief we continue to laugh as we remember all of the hilarious times we spent with our father as he was a truly funny man with a great wit and impeccable comedic timing combined with absolutely no shame at being silly in public. But even though our fond memories of our father will most likely be the hilarious ones, it was his strength and might as our father that will continue on in his legacy throughout our lives. He was strong, he was warm, he was firm when he needed to be, but he was also soft, loving and caring. He was wise about life, but also smart academically and he was a determined go getter. He shared all of these qualities with us as his children, but also with others who sought to follow in his footsteps and I suppose that in all of the life achievements he had and all of the memories we have, that is how we as his children will most strongly remember him.

Elizabeth Flynn (Daughter) "

Aboriginal & Islander Catholic Ministries

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Adelaide

Toiletry Bag program

Adelaide's Aboriginal Catholic Ministry has been supplying toiletry bags to hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and men from as far as Darwin and remote South Australia who come to Adelaide with their families to receive treatment in hospitals and clinics.

About 500 of the hand-made and packed bags have been used by those in need over the past two and a half years. They contain essential soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, pyjamas, shampoo and conditioner, deodorant, nappies and baby clothes for patients who often come to Adelaide for emergency treatment and arrive with little or no belongings. The programme has expanded over the past year to include baby bags, cancer patient bags and art & craft bags.

"These basic items are greatly appreciated by the patients and their families as it eases the stress even if by a small amount," said Women's and Children's Hospital Aboriginal Patient

Pathway Officer Nora Sevallos. She recently returned to the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry's Otherway Centre in Stepney to collect more bags. "We can't keep up with the demand," said Otherway Centre manager Gaye McMahon. "The response has been amazing," she said. "Clients are moved by this act of generosity and are amazed at the care and concern shown to them by this ministry," said Ms McMahon.

While it's the new mums and baby bags which are most popular, bags for children, teenagers, men and women are also being offered to patients in need by the Indigenous units of Adelaide's major hospitals. In the art bag there is a canvas, paints, pencils and blank paper for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients in hospital for extended periods of time. The toiletry bag program began in 2010 and was resurrected earlier this year following a generous donation from the military and hospitaller order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem commandery of South Australia – and more recently some financial support from Health SA.

The Otherway Centre is the hub of the Adelaide, Archdiocese' Aboriginal Catholic Ministry which supports Aboriginal people, prisoners, homeless, refugees and other vulnerable people. Ms McMahon said the toiletry bag program, like many of the ministry's services, relied heavily on donations. She said the St Vincent de Paul Society Dulwich/Burnside conference and Catholic Charities had provided donations, sewn bags and volunteered time packing bags. The centre is always looking for donations for the bags and their contents. Contact Gaye McMahon on 08 8362 3185 or gm@acc.asn.au



Nora Svellos from the Women's and Children's Hospital receiving Toiletry bags from ACM Staff

Easter in the Torres Strait



I had morning tea with the people before getting the ferry back to Thursday Island. That afternoon Fr Robert and I were both back on Thursday Island at 3.00pm for celebration of the Passion of the Lord which I presided at and which was well attended.

The Indigenous Connections team of Fr Robert and Deacon Ralph recently flew to Thursday Island to celebrate the Easter ceremonies. Thursday Island does not have a resident priest these days but the people do a great job in organising things and there are regular liturgies in each of the four churches in the parish. Different priests from the Cairns Diocese visit on a regular basis and the clergy are always made very welcome. It is a good place to visit.

The next day, Holy Saturday, the Easter Vigil was celebrated on Thursday Island. We started with the fire outside the church and lit the Pascal Candle, despite the challenge of a strong south-east breeze, before processing into the church for the Mass. On Easter Sunday we went by dingy to Hammond Island for Mass and then returned immediately to Thursday Island to catch the ferry to Horn Island for their Mass. After Mass on Horn Island we had morning tea with the people before getting the ferry back to Thursday Island.

All the Easter Ceremonies were well attended and it was wonderful to see the young people attending and participating.

On Sunday afternoon, with all the liturgies finished, we were invited over to Prince of Wales Island by the Mills family. There we had a swim in a beautiful fresh water creek before walking back to the beach for a lavish lunch. That day we were on four different islands – Thursday Island, Hammond Island, Horn Island and Prince of Wales Island, and it was a perfect way to finish our time in the Torres Strait.

Deacon Ralph Madigan - Indigenous Connections

Photo: Deacon Ralph Madigan presiding at the Celebration of the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday in the Church of the Sacred Heart on Thursday Island.

Diary Dates 2013

- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| 1 May | NATSICC meeting with Bishops | 20 June | World Refugee Day |
| | International Worker's Day | 7 July | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday |
| 9 May | The Ascension | 7-14 July | NAIDOC Week |
| 12 May | Mothers Day | 4 Aug | National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day |
| 19 May | Jubilee Sunday | 5 Aug | National Homeless Person's week begins |
| 26 May | Sorry Day | 15 Aug | Assumption of Mary |
| 27 May | Reconciliation Week Begins | | |
| 2 June | Corpus Christi | | |

I was a stranger and you welcomed me



NATSICC's Torres Strait Islander representative - Dolly McGaughey - travelled to the Islands to celebrate the World Day of Prayer. Catholics in the Torres Strait are facing the challenges of having no resident Priest. Lay ministers and Deacons from the mainland are assisting in Liturgies at the various Parishes on the Islands.

The World Day of Prayer is an international ecumenical Christian lay women's initiative and is celebrated annually in over 170 countries on the first Friday in March.

World Day of Prayer is a movement of Christian women who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year. Worship services held in different countries each year.

The movement aims to bring together women of various races, cultures, and traditions in a yearly common "Day of Prayer" as well as in closer fellowship, understanding and action throughout the years.

Every year, different country, different theme. This year 2013, the theme is chosen by France. France is a nation of diverse cultures, races and religions. About 58% of French are Christians. This year March 2013, I arrived (from Cairns) on Thursday Island in time for the celebration.

Prior to this day, invitations from the Sacred Heart

Catholic Parish were sent out to the community and the response was great. Several women (and men) from six different denominations gathered together at the Catholic Church on Island for a worship service and to celebrate the World Day of Prayer. They were from Uniting Church, Seventh Day Adventist, Full Gospel, Pentecostal AOG, Traditional Anglican Church of the Torres Strait, and of course, the Catholics. All had readings and prayers and songs prepared for the service.

A lovely lady who was originally from Africa gave her testimony in the church. She lived in Rockhampton for a while and whilst there, she met some Torres Strait Islander ladies whom she made friends with. She said she's been on Thursday Island for a month and already love the place and the people, and now they have a son.

I was very happy with the turn-out, and I thought to myself- this is what I call 'ecumenical' and I don't understand why we don't do this more often. That was my suggestion to them when we gathered for light



refreshments after the worship service. Lot of them agreed to it but 'how long are you staying? Or when is your next visit? Well okay then - next time! I was one of the musicians (guitar/vocal) helping to lead in songs of praise.

The music and songs didn't stop at the service, we were still singing at the presbytery while having light refreshments. The night was enjoyed by all who attended. (See Photos taken)

The turn-out proves that different races/religions can pray together and it also fit in nicely with the theme chosen by France for this year 2013. "I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU WELCOMED ME."

I pray with hope that there will be many more of these gatherings in years to come.

Still on Thursday Island the following weekend, I was invited to a dinner for the International Women's Year. It was catered for by the Year 12 students from Tagai State College. Couple of guest speakers who spoke about their early stage in life such as growing up, the transition from youth to adulthood, their mentors/role models, love and respect from their parents and family and their interest in life and positions they hold in office today. There was also a dance performance by Elma Kris from Bangarra Dance Company. Little bit of a stand-up comedy and also music and dancing which was enjoyed by all. (See Photos)

As for our Catholic Parishes of Thursday Is, Hammond and Horn Islands, still no resident priest. It seems they have to put in an early request for a priest to officiate Baptism, First Communion/Confirmation, weddings, blessing of headstones, and even funerals. The Diocese send a priest up to the islands only if they can or able to find/organise one.

Whilst on the islands, I attended two Sunday liturgies organised by lay persons, and I must say that they are doing a very good job of it but it is not the same as having a priest on residence. On the islands religious

keep the family and community together. There are few Eucharistic Ministers that do attend every Sunday. I did my bit to help when I was asked to do guitar/vocal.

Fr Rob Greenup, an Augustinian and our Aboriginal Deacon Ralph Madigan from Mareeba celebrated the services for Easter on the islands. They look forward to another trip up north.

So it is an on-going process, still praying for a priest (or nuns) and vocations.

Education side - 9 Indigenous employed at the Catholic schools on Thursday Island and Hammond Island campus.

Went with Maria Mills for a visit to Star Of The Sea Home. Was introduced to some people but there were other elders who saw me and spoke in language calling me and saying they remembered me and that I worked for the Department of Native Affairs (1963 phew that was too long ago) but meeting them put smiles on their faces and tears in my eyes. These sort of happenings make you live forever! It is always heartbreaking to walk into these types of 'homes' and see people sitting and just waiting, watching to see who will pay them a visit. These are aged, stroke, dementia, physical/mental abuse victims etc and all they need is for someone to hold their hand. Lots of smiles, tears and hugs - unable to let go. Family neglect.

Some of us (Indigenous Catholics) in Cairns are having a meeting to organise our July Liturgy which we have a date set for 14 July. We have another meeting coming up in June in preparation for the Mass. My (Nun) cousin has agreed to be the organist for the celebration and Fr Rob and Deacon Ralph will be the celebrant for the Mass (Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Sunday and also the beginning of NAIDOC week.

Dolly McGaughey - 09 April 2013.





Peace and mercy for all

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

7 July 2013

NATSICC Liturgy Resource

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Liturgy
resources available 17 May at www.natsicc.org.au**