

# Reflection by Erica Bernard

Broome resident Erica Bernard sees a lot of similarities in her Catholic faith and her Yawuru/Gidja spirituality. Erica is the Community Liaison Officer for the Broome Catholic Education Office and below she shares how Our Lady is reflected in the many strong women in her life.

## **BECAUSE OF YOU MY FAITH IS STRONG**

'Because of Her, we can' is this year's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday theme. So, I find myself reflecting on what that means to me, as an Aboriginal Catholic woman.

While sitting at the grotto of Our Lady Queen of Peace Cathedral in Broome with my Mimi Cissy, (my grandfather's sister) I asked her what should I write, she sat there for a moment and said well it should all start with her, pointing to Our Lady. On this day, we were getting ready to pray to her for the loss of a family member and as always in my home town of Broome every family gather to say the rosary when someone dies, for an anniversary or when someone needs our prayers. This led me to see how Our Lady is reflected in my mothers, grandmothers, aunties, sisters, cousins, daughters and nieces, all the woman in my life.

It brings to mind the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the announcement by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive a son through the power of the Holy Spirit and he shall be called Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-38). For her to

bear a child that will grow into a man that will die for me. Which brings to mind a story I have heard a few times about a group of women in a remote community wanting a statue of Our Lady and coming to the consensus that they choice the Pieta, Michelangelo's statue of the Blessed Mother with the broken body of her son which lay across her lap, nursed in her arms. The amount of tragic circumstances that many of our mothers/ grandmothers go through in losing a child is so evident in my family and communities on a daily basis, but as I look at my mothers, aunties, grandmothers and wonder what is it that holds them together, I see their devotion of love and prayer to Our Lady and to her son Jesus, and through prayer is where they connect and get their strength to keep going, keep living.

For every day that I will rise I'll pray that the Lord will grace me with his presence to do God's will, to set an example through my actions in what I do and all that I am for my children and my people. And that 'Because of her...' Mary Our Mother, I know 'I can...'

