



NATSICC Ltd



As the time for the celebration of Aboriginal Sunday (July 6th) draws near I commend to you the liturgy material provided by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC). The material serves as a resource to assist parishes and other faith communities to celebrate the unique contribution of the indigenous people to the life of the Church. The theme, *“The time for rebirth is now”* is most fitting as our nation continues to address the burning issue of reconciliation in our land, in our time.

In the words of the Holy Father , Pope John Paul II, in his address to indigenous people *“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.”*

May our celebrations on the first Sunday in July be joyfully received by all in the family of the faithful.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+Christopher Saunders
Bishop of Broome

To be included in your bulk mailing



**The National Aboriginal
And
Torres Strait
Islander Catholic Council**

LITURGY RESOURCES

The time for Rebirth is now

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

**Sunday 6 July 2003
14th Sunday in Ordinary time: Year B**

Liturgy Team Message

This Resource Kit is an invitation to celebrants and liturgy teams across Australia to prepare for the celebration of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday 2003.

The liturgy group strongly urges that protocol and practice of both local indigenous community and Christian traditions be respected.

Where possible it is important to seek and invite local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in the preparation of liturgy:

- This practical process is critical to the nurturing of the deep rooted significance of appropriate symbol and prayer; and
- Ensure respect for and enhance sacredness of ritual and ceremony according to both local community and Christian traditions.

If non-indigenous people are the only participants in the preparation of liturgy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday we encourage the use of suggested prayers prepared by the NATSICC liturgy team.

The Liturgy team sincerely thanks Archbishop Francis Carroll, Vicki Walker, Fr. Peter Williams and Bishops Christopher Saunders, Brian Heenan and Hilton Deakin, for their contribution to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Liturgy Resources.

We also take this opportunity to thank the National Liturgical Commission for their participation in our joint achievement, in journeying together in the hope of developing and adapting liturgies appropriate for celebrations such as National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. We pray for the continuing relationship of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council / National Liturgical Commission taskforce.

Robyn Albert, Lorraine Erlandson, Joan Hendriks

NATSICC Liturgy Team

Message from the National Liturgical Commission

Three years ago at the initiative of NATSICC the National Liturgical Commission established a working group of members of the NLC with members of the liturgy committee of NATSICC to work collaboratively on exploring liturgical issues that impact on the liturgical resources for parishes and other communities to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. These meetings have resulted in a shift of direction in the materials made available both last year and also this year. It recognises that there are many Catholic communities who gather for Eucharist on Sundays who have no indigenous peoples in the assembly. The NLC together with NATSICC is seeking ways now to address what is appropriate by way of text and symbol to be included in the resources made available to parishes. The beginning point is to discern who makes up the Sunday assembly, and perhaps a more pertinent question: if there are indigenous peoples in the wider community why are they not present in the Sunday assembly?

Fr Peter G. Williams
Executive Officer
National Liturgical Commission

Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference - Archbishop Francis Carroll

The theme of this year's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is ***"The time for rebirth is now"***.

The words are taken from Pope John Paul's Apostolic Exhortation - ***The Church in Oceania***, where he quotes from his famous 1986 address in Alice Springs.

In the letter following the Synod of Oceania, the Holy Father gave explicit attention, as had many participating Bishops, to the struggle of indigenous peoples who still ***"Seek a just and equitable recognition of their identity and rights"***.

Pope John Paul II expressed the Church's ***"Deep regret and asks for forgiveness where her children have been, or still are, party to these wrongs"***. He emphasized that ***"It is the Church's task to help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their traditions"***.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday provides a perfect opportunity for all Catholics, and indeed all Australians, to pray, reflect and respond to the unfinished business of achieving justice and the righting of relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples.

The NATSICC Liturgy group has done a great service in preparing this valuable resource for the proper celebration of the Sunday. I recommend it for use in all parishes and communities throughout Australia, as a vital sign that a genuine rebirth is taking place.



+Francis P Carroll President - Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

NATSICC Chairperson's message

The Time for re-birth is now! This statement by Pope John Paul in his address in Alice Springs in 1986 and repeated in his Apostolic Exhortation, *The Church in Oceania*, is the theme for the celebration of Aboriginal Sunday 2003.

Aboriginal Sunday is a time for celebration of a unique and beautiful culture and a time to recognise that much still has to happen in our nation for true recognition of that culture and for a real and lasting justice for our peoples. It is my hope and the hope of NATSICC that celebration of Aboriginal Sunday 2003 will help to re-ignite, or re-birth, the movement of National Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Within the framework of celebration and our faith, let us bring together all peoples to once again unite in the struggle to recognise, affirm and celebrate Australia's Indigenous peoples and culture. We cannot afford to let the efforts of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation fade into the distance before any real and lasting change has been effected, the struggle must continue Let us make Aboriginal Sunday 2003 the re-birth of this movement to bring us together as a nation.

I hope the resources prepared by the NATSICC liturgy team will be of benefit / help for use in your parish or school and let's put Reconciliation back on the agenda.



Vicki Walker
Chairperson

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Liturgy
Prepared by NATSICC

**HOMILY NOTES AND REFERENCE
MATERIAL**

Prepared by Bishop Brian Heenan

“The Time for Rebirth is Now”

Introduction:

The theme for this Sunday's Liturgy is taken from “Ecclesia in Oceania”. Pope John Paul says to the indigenous peoples of Australia like a tree that has suffered the ravages of a bushfire, you have survived the flames, and you still have the power to be born

THE TIME FOR REBIRTH IS NOW.

We have become much more aware of how much our Aboriginal and Islander people suffered through white invasion of their land and islands and we are part of an ongoing movement to address those wrongs and help to create a new experience.

The alternate Opening Prayer begins “Father in the rising of your Son, death gives birth to new life. The sufferings he endured restored hope to a fallen world”.

The message of the Lord Jesus, following his death and resurrection offers special encouragement to indigenous people to seek a rebirth. It also offers to the whole Church community an incentive to support that rebirth. If society in general acting out of great misuse of power and racism, has disempowered indigenous people and abused their rights, then the power of Christ can change what may seem hopeless into a new birth – a new understanding of the place of indigenous people in Australian society.

Suggestion:

Reflect on the theme and recall your experience of Aboriginal or Islander People you know. Have they shared their story with you? Could you meet with one of them and ask what a ‘rebirth’ might mean for them? Their thoughts, or your own experience of their being welcomed or rejected, might be a good start to a homily.

Keep in Mind:

Ezekiel was chosen to be a prophet. It was God's mission – not his. God was telling him that his message would probably be rejected, nevertheless, “you are to go regardless”.

Justice Issues are not always popular even among Christian people. There is much racism still in Australia and as preachers and prophets in God's name, we have a call to speak God's truth. We have to deal with rejection by winning people to tolerance and respect.

St Paul is encouraging when he says “I was given a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me and stop me from getting too proud”. Whatever the temptation or burden, it led Paul to God for strength to cope, to see that such a weakness was good for him and he gave to us all that powerful reminder “it is when I am weak, than I am strong”.-

Indigenous people have been crushed, not only by the harsh treatment of the past, but by the failure of ordinary people, including ‘good’ Christians, to acknowledge what happened and say ‘sorry’. Can we identify with the ‘weakness’ that our indigenous people have experienced and support them as they move on to a real rebirth?

The Gospel:

Mark presents the incident of where Jesus is rejected because he is known within the community. “Where did this man get this knowledge from?” Isn't he just the son of a carpenter and Mary? And they would not accept him. Jesus said “a prophet is only rejected in his own country”. He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Like Jesus, our indigenous people have not been accepted in their own country. They have been in Australia and some surrounding islands for at least 40,000 years. They were invaded by white settlers who mistakenly, as has been acknowledged, claimed the land for the British Empire. It has been clearly established that it was not “terra nullius”. Also, Aborigines have lived here for many thousands of years. Yet,

Indigenous people are still fighting for their rights, still asking for recognition in Australia today, like Jesus, they are prophets despised in their own country.

While reflecting on the injuries suffered, it remains true that real progress has been made. There is a growing recognition in our Church and in society generally, of the story of indigenous people. There is an acknowledgement of injury that was done, unjust policies of Church and State and a growing willingness to respect and honour the dignity of Aboriginal and Islander peoples.

Yet, it is not for non indigenous people to decide what should happen to bring about 'rebirth'. Indigenous people, like Jesus, are the prophets from among their own people and as we listen to their hopes and dreams, can we ask "how can we help the time for rebirth' which is NOW.

We pray that Jesus will not be amazed at our lack of faith – faith in him who can work the miracle to change attitudes, soften hearts, to hear his Good News proclaimed in the Gospel Acclamation. Can we ask our people who gather faithfully to share in the Eucharist, to share in the Mission of Jesus, to set the downtrodden free? Can we, in practical ways, hear the call of Pope John Paul II and our indigenous brothers and sisters, that the time for rebirth is now.

Background Reading:

Ecclesia in Oceania – No. 28 – Indigenous Peoples

Unjust economic policies are especially damaging to indigenous peoples, young nations and their traditional cultures; and it is the Church's task to help indigenous cultures preserve their identity and maintain their traditions. The Synod strongly encouraged the Holy See to continue its advocacy of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

A special case is that of the Australian Aborigines whose culture struggles to survive. For many thousands of years they have sought to live in harmony with the often harsh environment of their 'big country'; but now their identity and culture are gravely threatened. In more recent times, however,

their joint efforts to ensure survival and gain justice have begun to bear fruit. There was a saying from Australian bush life heard in the Synod Hall; "If you stay closely united, you are like a tree standing in the middle of a bush-fire sweeping through the timber: the leaves are scorched, the tough bark is scarred and burned, but inside the tree the sap still flows, and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree you have survived the flames, and you have still the power to be born. The time for rebirth is now"

The Church will support the cause of all indigenous peoples who seek a just and equitable recognition of their identity and their rights; and the Synod Fathers expressed support for the aspirations of indigenous people for a just solution to the complex question of the alienation of their lands.

Whenever the truth has been suppressed by governments and their agencies or even by Christian communities, the wrongs done to the indigenous peoples need to be honestly acknowledged. The Synod supported the establishment of "Truth Commissions", where these can help resolve historical injustices and bring about reconciliation within the wider community or the nation. The past cannot be undone, but honest recognition of past injustices can lead to measures and attitudes which will help to rectify the damaging effects for both the indigenous community and the wider society. The Church expresses deep regret and asks forgiveness where her children have been or still are party to these wrongs. Aware of the shameful injustices done to indigenous peoples in Oceania, the Synod Fathers apologised unreservedly for the part played in these by members of the Church, especially where children were forcibly separated from their families. Governments are encouraged to pursue with still greater energy programmes to improve the conditions and the standard of living of indigenous groups in the vital areas of health, education, employment and housing.

Vatican Council II - "The Church in the Modern World" No. 58

There are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his self-revelation to his people culminating in the

fullness of manifestation in his incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age. Similarly the Church has existed through the centuries in varying circumstances and has utilized the resources of different cultures in its preaching to spread and explain the message of Christ, to examine and understand it more deeply, and to express it more perfectly in the liturgy and in various aspects of the life of the faithful.

Nevertheless, the Church has been sent to all ages and nations and, therefore, is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern. The Church is faithful to its traditions and is at the same time conscious of its universal mission; it can, then, enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves.

The Good News of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them in Christ. In this way the Church carries out its mission and in that very act it stimulates and advances human and civil culture, as well as contributing by its activity, including liturgical activity, to man's interior freedom.

Suggestion for Liturgy preparation

Rite of Welcome

Today we celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday across Australia. We celebrate as Christians indigenous and non-indigenous. The theme "The Time for Rebirth is Now", is a call, today and everyday, to open our hearts and minds to God and invite the Holy Spirit to change us that our way of living be that of peace, unity and reconciliation with God and one another.

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 the rite of sprinkling in the Roman Missal.***

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)

See Roman Missal of the day. We recommend the alternate opening prayer.

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)

Prayers of the Faithful

Please select the intentions for your community from the following:

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 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: 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 your guidance for 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.

Reader: We thank and praise you 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.

Reader: We pray for all 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. **(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 one another. In your eyes 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.

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.

Recommend Preface **Sunday in Ordinary time 6**

Closing 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)

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)