



Sent Forth in Strength and Hope

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Sunday Resource Kit

6 July 2025

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 Organisation 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.

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

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Cover artwork

Artwork by **Pollyanne Carter**

"I have been called to spread the Word of God to grow people in faith with love to bring them into the Kingdom. Jesus showed us how to do this when he was on earth. Now we follow his example."

Matthew 13:23 The seeds that fall on good ground are the people who hear and understand the message. They produce as much as 100 or 60 or 30 times what was planted.



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



Welcome to the NATSICC Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday Liturgy

Peace be with you, and welcome to this year's celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday — a sacred moment for our Church to gather as one in the love of Christ.

This year, we come together under the theme: "Sent Forth in Strength and Hope." It is Christ who sends us — to walk together in faith, grounded in the deep spirituality and culture of First Nations Peoples, strengthened by the Gospel, and filled with hope for the future God is leading us into.

Our Catholic Church is a tapestry woven from many cultures. From the enduring wisdom of the world's oldest continuing cultures — the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples — to those who have journeyed from distant lands, we are one Body in Christ. In our diversity, we discover richness. In our unity, we find strength. And in every heart, we see the Spirit of God at work.

Saint John Paul II once reminded us:

"The Church herself is enriched by the development of different forms of culture... she takes them up in her evangelising mission and adopts them."

Today, we honour that truth. We celebrate the living story of faith and culture walking hand in hand — of ancient traditions alive in Christ, and of a Church made more whole when all are welcomed, seen, and heard.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC) invites you to enter into today's Liturgy with open hearts. May it deepen your appreciation of First Nations spirituality, draw us closer in Christ, and renew our shared calling toward reconciliation, justice, and love.

Whether you're gathered in a Parish, school, or community, may the Holy Spirit move among us and send us forth — in the strength of Christ and in the unshakable hope of the Gospel.

Thank you for joining us. May God bless us all on this journey together.

NATSICC Liturgy team

EMBRACING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE IN THE LIFE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A ROADMAP TO WALK TOGETHER

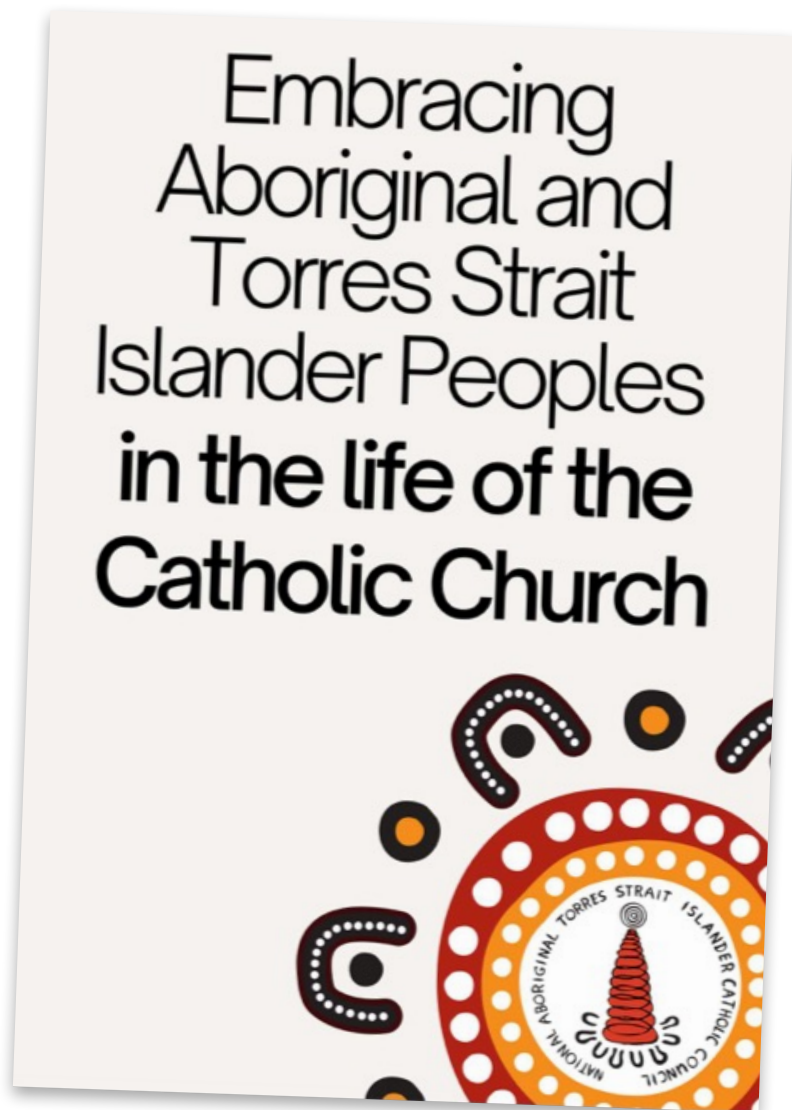
“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?...’ And the King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

— Matthew 25:37–40

Across our country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have carried the message of Jesus in deep and powerful ways. Their spirituality is ancient, their faith is strong, and their presence in the Church is a gift to all of us.

But there is still work to do.

NATSIICC’s Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Life of the Catholic Church is a warm and practical roadmap for Catholic parishes and organisations to reach out, connect with, and fully embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in every part of Church life. Whether you’re a parish priest, staff member, volunteer, PPC member, or simply someone who wants to make a difference, this guide offers clear, thoughtful steps you can take—no matter your setting or size.



OFFICIALLY ENDORSED BY THE PLENARY COUNCIL

Approved as a key outcome of the **Fifth Plenary Council of Australia**, the Embracing document is more than a guide—it’s a National call to action. It affirms that the Church in Australia is called to walk alongside First Nations peoples with humility, openness, and love.

It offers organisations and faith communities real, grounded ways to act—ways that respect culture, honour Elders, and build meaningful relationships rooted in faith.

WHAT'S INSIDE THE DOCUMENT?

At its heart, Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Life of the Catholic Church invites parishes and Catholic organisations to live out the Gospel through relationship, respect, and renewal. Grounded in Catholic teaching and shaped by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics, the document provides a vision for how every community can take meaningful steps toward a more inclusive and culturally enriched Church.

It outlines **five practical and pastoral recommendations**, each supported by stories, theology, and examples that are realistic and achievable. The emphasis is not on grand gestures, but on genuine commitment and ongoing action.

This is a living document—designed to be prayed with, discussed, and most importantly, lived out in community.

Recommendation	What it could look like
<input type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians	Begin gatherings or liturgies with an Acknowledgment of Country and include signage at your entrance
<input type="checkbox"/> Include First Nations voices	Invite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into leadership roles, ministries, and planning groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Celebrate culture in Catholic life	Use Indigenous artwork, language, and music—especially during events like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday
<input type="checkbox"/> Connect with local community	Reach out to local Aboriginal organisations or Elders to build relationships and listen deeply
<input type="checkbox"/> Commit to ongoing formation	Encourage your team, council or staff to reflect on the Embracing document together and take steps forward in faith

ONE SMALL STEP CAN BEGIN THE JOURNEY

The Holy Spirit is already moving in our Communities. Sometimes all it takes is one conversation, one meeting, one prayer said together—to spark something new.

Bring the Embracing Document to your next team meeting or pastoral planning day. Print the checklist. Invite local voices. Share a meal and start a conversation.

Together, let us build a Church that not only welcomes, but **embraces**.

Download the document at https://www.natsicc.org.au/assets/embracing_final_reduced.pdf.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

An **Acknowledgement of Country** is a meaningful way for all people to show awareness and deep respect for the culture, heritage, and continuing connection that Traditional Custodians have with their lands and waters on this special day.

Acknowledging Country is a sign of respect offered to the Traditional Custodians of the place where a Mass, meeting, school assembly, community gathering, or event is held. It may be formal or informal, but its significance should never be reduced to simply a procedural step or ‘box-ticking’ exercise.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, many of whom who have endured exclusion, discrimination, and marginalisation, a sincere and respectful Acknowledgement can be a powerful act of solidarity and inclusion. When done with genuine intent, it speaks volumes.

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)

RESPONSORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For the first time in 2025, NATSICC is offering a **Responsorial Acknowledgement of Country** as a new option for use in the Mass.

Taking place after the Opening Hymn and before the Liturgy of the Word, it invites the Community to honour the Traditional Custodians of the land in a prayerful and participatory way. In the familiar pattern of call and response, we show respect for Country, for Elders, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples—drawing us into deeper communion as the Body of Christ.

Leader: We are gathered on Country

All: May God give abundant life to this land

Leader: We acknowledge the People (and their Elders past and present)

All: May Christ give his grace and peace to them

Leader: We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples who are present here

All: May the Spirit give healing and wisdom to all.

Leader: May we become the Church Jesus wants us to be

All: Amen



WELCOME TO COUNTRY

A **Welcome to Country** is a traditional and sacred protocol of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, conducted by Elders or Traditional Custodians to welcome visitors onto their land. Practised for thousands of years, it is a deeply spiritual act that acknowledges the enduring connection between First Nations Peoples and their Country.

In Catholic schools and parishes, a Welcome to Country may take the form of a speech and, depending on local custom, may include cultural expressions such as **song, dance, didgeridoo, or a Smoking Ceremony**. This welcome should **always take place at the beginning** of a gathering, preferably as the first item in the program or liturgy.

SMOKING CEREMONY – A SACRED ACT

A **Smoking Ceremony**, when included as part of the Welcome, holds profound spiritual significance. The smoke is used to cleanse and prepare the space and those present, promoting healing and peace. While Christ is our Redeemer and source of reconciliation, the Church recognises and values sacred cultural rituals that express the human longing for purification and closeness to God.

When incorporated thoughtfully, the Smoking Ceremony can reflect the spirit of the **Penitential Rite** in the Mass—uniting us with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters in humility, healing, and shared faith.

PLANNING RESPECTFULLY

We encourage schools and parishes to:

- **Engage local Elders or Aboriginal Catholic Ministries** early in the planning process;
- **Meet beforehand** to discuss the structure, expectations, and practicalities (e.g., smoke detectors);
- Approach the Ceremony with openness, reverence, and a willingness to listen and learn.

For further guidance please consult with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Ministry and visit:

www.natsicc.org.au/acknowledgement-and-welcome-to-country.html

By honouring these traditions, we walk together towards reconciliation and continue building the Church Jesus calls us to be—welcoming, inclusive, and faithful.



HYMNS, READINGS AND PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION



Readings

First Reading – Isaiah 66: 10-14c

Responsorial Psalm – Psalms 66: 1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16 and 20

Second Reading – Galatians 6: 14-18

Alleluia – Colossians 3: 15a, 16a

Gospel – Luke 10: 1-12, 17-20



Hymns

Entrance

“Companions on a Journey” | Carey Landry

“Here I am Lord ” | Dan Schutte

Offertory/Gifts

“Lord, to whom shall we go” | Michael Herry

“We remember ” | Marty Haugen

Communion

“Summoned by love” | Trisha Watts/Monica O’Brien

“Prayer to St. Francis” | Sebastian Temple

Recessional

“Christ be our Light” | Bernadette Farrell

“All the Earth” | Lucien Deiss



Prayers of Intercession

Priest/Leader:

Gathered on ancient land, walking in the footsteps of Ancestors gone before us, we lift our prayers to God who calls us to strength, vision, and hope.

1. For the needs of the Church:

For Pope Leo XIV, our Bishops, Clergy and all who serve your people;

Help guide Church leaders to grow ever more faithful, more just, and more alive with your Spirit by listening with open hearts and minds to the voices of our First Nation Peoples, especially the vision of the young and the wisdom of the Elders.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

2. For those who serve in positions of leadership:

May they govern with courage, humility, and deep respect for every culture and all of God's creation, and make informed decisions that will bear fruit not just today, but for generations to come

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

3. For those whose strength is challenged or failing:

Help us be the healing hands and feet of Christ, walking gently beside them, offering hope where there is hurt, and light where there is fear.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

4. For our Catholic Communities in Australia and around the world:

That we may grow like the mighty tree — roots deep in faith, branches wide in welcome, sheltering all with strength, vision, and hope.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

5. We pray for all those who have fallen asleep in the Great Dreaming of our Creator Spirit:

May their spirit rest in the embrace of your eternal love and peace.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Priest/Leader:

Creator of earth and sky,
lead us with your Spirit,
send us forth in strength and hope,
and teach us to walk always as one together.
Through Christ our Lord..

All: Amen.

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

Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Catholics



4.6% of the Catholic
population is aged under 5

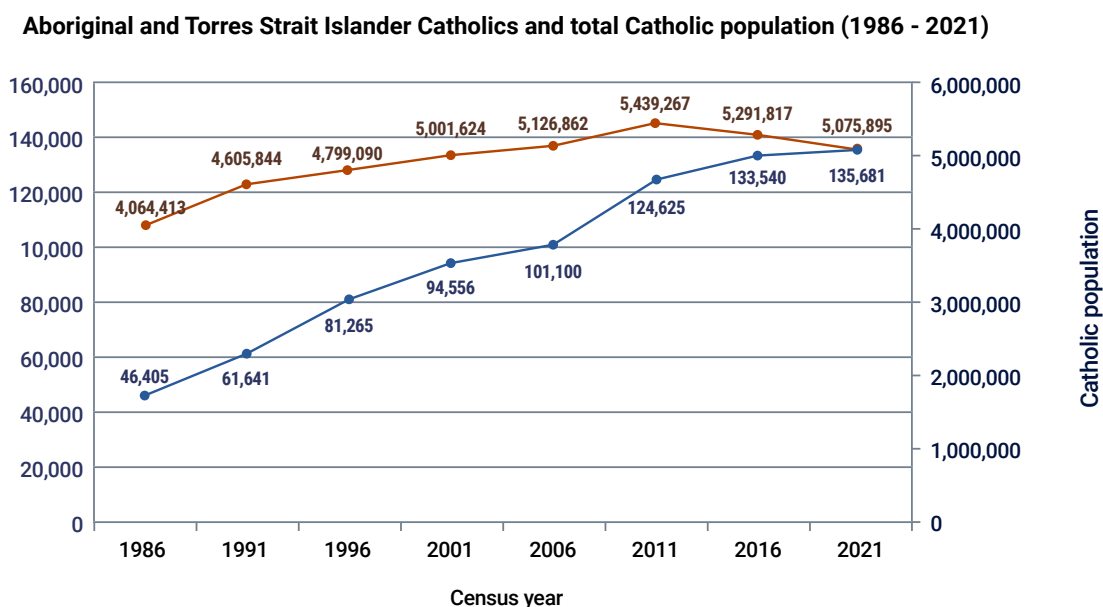


10 dioceses which have over
one-fifth of their Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander population
who identify as Catholic



8.2% of Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Catholics
under the age of 5

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics



Language and First Australians

Language groups are essential to First Nations culture and each language group can be viewed as an individual community with unique cultural traditions, experiences and customs. The sustainability of language groups therefore corresponds to the sustainability of individual communities.

Consider the following facts about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups:

- Over **250** Indigenous language groups covered the Australian continent at the time of European settlement in 1788.
- Today only around **120** of those languages are still spoken and many are at risk of being lost as Elders pass away.
- According to the second National Indigenous Language Survey of 2014, of the **120** language groups that are still being spoken, **100** are listed as endangered or critically endangered.

Top three

Parishes

With the highest number of Catholics who use Indigenous Languages at home:

1	Bathurst Island	Tiwi	1,123
2	Wadeye	Murrinh Patha	1,075
3	Alice Springs	Arrernte languages	755

With the highest percentage of Catholics who use Indigenous Languages at home:

1	Bathurst Island	Tiwi	94.4%
2	Wadeye	Murrinh Patha	92.7%
3	Santa Teresa	Arrernte languages	92%

Dioceses

With the highest number of Catholics who use Indigenous Languages at home:

1	Darwin	Tiwi	5,284
2	Broome	Kukatja	1,469
3	Cairns	Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole)	809

With the highest percentage of Catholics who use Indigenous Languages at home:

1	Broome	Tiwi	19.7%
2	Darwin	Kukatja	13.5%
3	Cairns	Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole)	1.5%

National

The number of Australians and Catholics who used an Indigenous Language at home in 2011, 2016 and 2021 and the proportion who are Catholic.

	Catholics	Australians	% Catholic among all users
2011	9,447	61,799	15.3
2016	9,825	64,767	15.2

Copyright information :

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 otherwise specified.



LITURGICAL RESOURCES - ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ASSEMBLIES

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 Intercession 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

Celebrant: 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.

**Let us pray dear friends
that our Creator God may bless this gift of water,
which will be sprinkled on us,
as it was by ancient peoples at waterholes
and today reminds us of our baptism.
On this day which you have made your own
We ask you Lord to bless this water:
May it be our safeguard and protection.**

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 to accompany a procession of the Word.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

These could be prepared by the Community prior to Mass or prayed spontaneously at the appropriate time 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.

ABORIGINAL OUR FATHER

The singing of the Aboriginal Our Father may replace the usual text.

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. (x2)

We believe your word, Father, we are your children,
give us bread today. (x2)

We have done wrong, we are sorry, teach us, Father,
all about your Word. (x2)

Others have done wrong to us, and we are sorry for
them, Father, today. (x2)

Stop us from doing wrong, Father, save us all from
the evil one. (x2)

You are our Father, you live in heaven, we talk to you.
Father you are good. (x2)


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 Clap Sticks can accompany the choir.
- * Didgeridoo and Clap Sticks 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 Clap Sticks rather than bells at the Words of Institution (Consecration). Also use clap sticks during the singing of the Great Amen at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer.

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 ASSEMBLIES

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.

It would be important that they participate in the whole Mass, to honour their engagement as a liturgical ministry. This is also important for those who might prepare and lead a smoking ceremony.

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> or the Responsorial Acknowledgement included in this resource.

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, we join the Australian Bishops and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council in celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday.

On this day, we honour 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.

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.

(if there are any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders in the assembly it would be most appropriate that they do the sprinkling).

MUSIC

Prior to Mass, during the arrival of the Priest during the water sprinkling, or during the Gifts Procession, a recording of instrumental Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander music (Didgeridoo, Clap Sticks) 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, an empty Collamon 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.

EUCCHARISTIC 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

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday falls within the National celebration of NAIDOC Week. A week where we celebrate history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Throughout this week, it is common to hold cultural ceremonies such as Smoking ceremonies and a Welcome to Country. Welcome to Country holds significant cultural importance where visitors are not just welcomed on to Country but in doing so, are offered safe passage, protection both physically and spiritually and asked to respect the Country that is walked on. At the heart of the Welcome to Country is the natural desire for all of us, to always feel welcomed, valued and safe.

In this Sunday's Gospel from Luke, the disciples are sent forth ahead of Jesus being told to not be weighed down by possessions; to rely upon hospitality; to have no roadside chats but most importantly be prepared for the hostility and rejection ahead. In other words, leaving behind the guarantee of shelter and support, being prepared to walk into places where we may feel neither welcomed nor valued nor safe. All of this is for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel is full of imagery and numbers. We are told that Jesus sends out the seventy-two disciples in pairs. Why are these numbers so significant? Travelling in pairs is a reminder that spreading the gospel is relational, it happens between people. To live out discipleship, we need to depend on each other for support, hospitality and kindness. As for the number seventy-two, it is often understood to refer to the nations of the earth. (Gen 10:2-31) For the Kingdom of God is open to everyone, as St Paul writes, "it does not matter if a person is circumcised or not; what matters is for him (and her) to become an altogether new creature." (Gal 6:15) A new creation built on encounter and relationship with each other and with Jesus Christ. A newness that brings strength, understanding, hope and builds community.

Imagine telling a group of followers (mainly Jewish) that you must lead a radical life of facing homelessness and travelling into a foreign territory where *"you must eat and drink what is set before you"*. Therefore, a disciple must be open to being vulnerable. Vulnerability that opens to all of us greater possibilities to encounter the hospitality of God which is at the heart of Luke's Gospel. Hospitality where God enters our lives and the lives of those around us providing for our needs. Vulnerability is experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities that has both strengthened culture and faith.



Peace be with you....Jesus sends the disciples in peace, a sign of the kingdom. Reflecting Isaiah's prophecy in the first reading when he speaks of peace, *like a son comforted by his mother will I comfort you*. For Isaiah, peace is not an absence of hostility or suffering but a place where love consoles, nurtures and protects us forever. It is God's peace. Words of comfort to a people returning from exile to a ruined Jerusalem, words of comfort to our world that sometimes feels troubled and uncertain.

Jesus continues to invite us as disciples into the hospitality of God, into being bearers of peace sending us forth in strength and hope. What is it that Jesus asks of us today? He asks us not to be too comfortable but rather to be ready to carry what the late Pope Francis wrote - the *Joy of the Gospel* to everyone we meet. "We should carry it in our minds, carry it in our hearts, carry it on our faces, making sure that it is peace we bring into people's lives rather than turmoil and division." Or put simply as William J Thoms once wrote, "Be careful how you live; you will be the only Bible some people ever read."

In this Jubilee Year of hope who are the people around us who most need peace and hope in their lives. Are they in our families, workplaces, our schools, our communities, our parishes? Hope encourages us "to look outside ourselves, to embrace authentic beauty, change attitudes that exclude others, overcome life's challenges

with courage, and trust that joy and hope are still possible, even in challenging times." (*Pope Francis, A Gift of Joy and Hope*) Hope challenges us to see every day and every person we encounter with Easter eyes and calls us all, to make places where all will feel the hospitality of God, places where we are all made welcome, valued and safe. Lord send us forth in strength and hope.

Fr Darryl Mackie (Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle)

Proud Wiradjuri Man

Former ACM Chaplain Sydney





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)

An example of how your Parish might incorporate the Traditional Place name:

Huon Valley Parish

Melukerdee Country | Cygnet, Tasmania

- Organise 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 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 Organisations when planning events and activities, and to ensure that they are respectful and Culturally appropriate.



YOUTH ACTIVITIES



How can we, as followers of Jesus, respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who face challenges when admitted to hospital?

1. CLASS ACTIVITY: We are all connected!

SET-UP

- You will need a ball of string.
- Everyone stands in a circle.

INSTRUCTIONS

Start the Web: One person begins by wrapping the string around their wrist. They then share something they like or enjoy, such as a place they like to visit.

Sharing Common Interests: If others in the circle like the same place, they raise their hands. The person with the string then throws or rolls the ball of string to someone else who has their hand up, aiming to create a web by passing the string across the circle.

Continue Passing: Continue this process with other ideas or actions. For example, share something they do to care for creation (e.g. recycling, planting trees, reducing waste). If others have also done this action, they raise their hands and the string is passed to them.



Photo by Kimson Doan on Unsplash

Building the Web: The group continues to pass the string, creating a connected web of shared experiences and common values.

Ensure Everyone Participates: Make sure each person has a chance to hold and pass the string so that everyone feels connected and engaged.

Reflection: Once the web is formed, take a moment to discuss the interconnectedness of everyone in the group. Reflect on how even small actions, shared values, and common experiences link us all together, just like the web of string.

2. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS IN ACTION

SOLIDARITY

Every person deserves to be treated with love and care

DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Standing together with those in need

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

Prioritising help for those who are most vulnerable

3. HOW CAN I RESPOND?

BY WRITING A LETTER OF HOPE

Write a handwritten letter to be included in the NATSICC Hospital Bags.

NATSICC provides Hospital Bags with toiletry items for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are admitted to hospital – often without any basic items to make their stay more comfortable.

Your letter of hope and support could be a bright light in a difficult time. Send your letters to admin@natsicc.org.au.

BY ADVOCATING FOR AND SUPPORTING LOCAL MEDICAL SERVICES

4. WHAT HAVE I LEARNT?

- In what ways did this task help you put your faith into action? (Think about how it connected to values like compassion, service, or love for others.)
- How did this activity deepen your understanding of the challenges experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in accessing healthcare and support?

*THIS RESOURCE IS CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PARRAMATTA DIOCESE.*

PILGRIMS OF HOPE



29 Sept - 3 Oct 2025

2025 NATSICC *Assembly*



Keynote

**STAN
GRANT**



For more information
or to register:
www.natsicc.org.au

The NATSICC National Assembly is an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to come together with those working alongside us in the Church to celebrate the gifts that First Australians bring to our Australian Catholic Church.

Delegates will experience a range of speakers and workshop presenters that explore the ways in which Traditional Culture and Catholic Faith are each strengthened and enriched when brought together in an authentic and thoughtful way. Registration includes a Day on Country experience.

Featuring presentations and workshops by:

Bishop Tim Norton | Kelly Humphrey (ACU) | Murri Ministry | Fr Steve Fletcher
Madeline Jadaí, Maureen Yanawana (Kimberley WA)

