

'NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY' HOMILY 3 JULY 2016

Strong words from **Pope Francis** earlier this year, in his statement on Indigenous Peoples.

*'And yet, on many occasions, in a systematic and organised way,
your people have been misunderstood and excluded from society.
Some have considered your values, culture and traditions to be inferior.
Others, intoxicated by power, money and market trends,
have stolen your lands or contaminated them.
How sad this is!
How worthwhile it would be for each of us to examine our consciences
and learn to say, "Forgive me!"
Today's world, ravaged as it is by a throwaway culture, needs you!' (15/2/16).*

Saint Pope John Paul 11 visited Alice Springs on November 29 th, 1986.

He addressed our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Peoples as he asked the question,

*'why should you not be allowed the happiness of being with God and each other in
Aboriginal fashion?'*

He went on to say,

*'You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you.
And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to
be until you have made your contribution to her life
and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.'*

In the Second Reading from Galatians 6/14-18,

St Paul reminds us about the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
through whom the world is crucified to me and, and I to the world.

We ask ourselves in solidarity, through the cross of Jesus,
are we, each of us, crucified to the world and the world to us?

I invite you to ask our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters, our First Peoples,

what is their experience of living in a crucified world.

In what way, in 2016, are they crucified?

Let us learn from them as we share the cross.

We must also ask, in what ways today, does the Church still crucify them?

There are NO First Peoples Catholic priests in Australia at present.

There are married deacons, but not priests. Why?

We have had an Indigenous Catholic priest in the past.

Why can there be Indigenous Protestant ministers and pastors, and even Indigenous Anglican Bishops, but no Indigenous Catholic priests in 2016?

What does this say about us as Church???

The First Reading today from Isaiah 66/10-14 celebrates the return to the land after exile.

It speaks with a rich feminine image of being nurtured at the breast.

The people are invited to rejoice.

In the psalm the earth is invited to cry out to God with joy.
Our First Peoples have a depth of understanding how the interconnectivity of earth and people can rejoice and how it can groan in pain.

The Gospel from Luke 10/1-12, 17-20
invites us to a simple lifestyle
as we live out our mission of sharing the Good News of Jesus.

The liturgy today has been promoted by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council NATSICC.

The Queensland representative of this body is Aunty Evelyn Parkin from Dunwich, Stradbroke Island near Brisbane. She explains that it is called Minjerribah, Quandamooka Country.

She reflects on her story.

*"I give thanks to God for the way I was nurtured by my own people
because it was the foundation of my Spirituality to build upon as I matured.
My spiritual life has been a great passion,
guiding me to search,
to achieve Certificates and Diplomas of Christian Leadership
and to gain a Masters of Theology to finally teaching theology at Wontulp-Bi- Buya
College.
All these experiences and much more together connected me with my own inner
spirituality
that I now cannot separate either because it is who I am
and my journey with God, our Creator, His Son Jesus,
and the Holy Spirit entwining it all with Mother Earth and the whole of the Cosmic
Universe."*

Today in this Eucharist let us joyfully receive the contribution of our Sisters and Brothers.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – 'National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Sunday' – 3 July 2016]
[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/070316.cfm>]