

'RECEIVE AND WELCOME - NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY'  
HOMILY - 2 JULY 2017

Part of today's Gospel of John Chapter 10 says:

*'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me,  
and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.  
Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet  
will receive a prophet's reward;  
and whoever welcomes a righteous person  
in the name of a righteous person  
will receive the reward of the righteous;  
and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones  
in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'*

#### RECEIVE AND WELCOME – TRANSLATION

Do we translate the Greek word [dechomai \[δέχομαι\]](#) as 'receive' or 'welcome'?  
Let us try both words.

#### RECEIVE

We could ask a diplomat to explain to us different protocols for receiving someone, depending on the event, the circumstances, the country, the culture or the particular group. Varying international cultural customs include eye contact, position of feet, intonation of voice, use of hands, space between people, reciprocal gifts. Going overseas, we can read a travel guidebook that explains such customs. Receiving someone includes respect and awareness of culture.

#### WELCOME - SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Again, we could ask a diplomat to explain to us different ways and meanings of 'welcome'.

#### HOW WOULD A TOUR OPERATOR EXPLAIN TO VISITORS TO AUSTRALIA THE 'AUSSIE' WAYS OF WELCOME?

WHAT DO PARTICULAR PHRASES MEAN?

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMEONE IS MERELY BEING POLITE?

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU ARE TRULY WELCOME?

WHAT DOES A HANDSHAKE OR NOD OF THE HEAD MEAN?

AND OUR SLANG WORDS FOR WELCOME?

WHAT DOES A STANDING OVATION MEAN?

IS OUR WELCOME CONDITIONAL?

WHAT DOES HOSPITALITY MEAN?

ARE THERE DEGREES OF HOSPITALITY?

WOULD WE WISH GOD ONLY TO BE POLITE TO US?

ONLY TO TOLERATE US?

DO WE WANT TO BE RECEIVED INTO THE LOVE AND JOY AND PEACE OF GOD?

DO WE WISH TO BE LOVED OR MERELY ACKNOWLEDGED?

## WELCOME AND RECEIVING – A PROPHET, A RIGHTEOUS PERSON, A CHARITABLE PERSON

The Gospel continues with the welcome / receiving of -

a **PROPHET**

a **RIGHTEOUS PERSON** - person of integrity and justice who sincerely loves God and neighbour

a **CHARITABLE PERSON** offering help to the little ones

Are we **PROPHETIC** in our welcome of people?

Are we **RIGHTEOUS** in our welcome of people?

Are we **CHARITABLE** in our welcome of people?

## TODAY WE CELEBRATE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUNDAY HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PROTOCOLS? AND WAYS OF WELCOMING AND RECEIVING?

Let us look at this [Indigenous map of Australia](#). (map held up)

Though not completely accurate, imagine each area with its own set of laws and protocols.

Imagine yourself arriving at the boundary of someone else's territory.

You might use your 'bull-roarer' to let them know you are there. (bull-roarer held up)

Then when someone arrives, hand them your 'message stick'. (message sticks held up)

Not taking the land and customs and protocols of others for granted,

You ask to be received.

## TWO BOOKS TO HELP US LEARN ABOUT OUR NEIGHBOURS

Let us learn about our neighbours.

This book is '[On the Banks of the Barambah – A History of Cherbourg](#)' from the Ration Shed Museum, 2013

[A brief introduction is given to help us understand]

This book is called '[Aboriginal Campsites of Greater Brisbane - An Historical Guide](#)'  
By Dr Ray Kerklove, 2015

[Local references to our area include Bald Bills, Bracken Ridge, Sandgate]

Both books provide insights for us into the living Indigenous cultures of this land.

**DO WE RESPECT THE PROTOCOLS OF THESE COMMUNITIES?  
DO WE RECEIVE AND WELCOME THEM IN CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, BUSINESSES,  
WORKPLACE, SPORTING CLUBS, UNIVERSITIES, COMMUNAL AGENCIES AND HUBS, MUSIC  
GROUPS, PARENT GROUPS?**

**DO WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THE LAND ON WHICH WE STAND?  
WHAT ARE THE CUSTOMS TO BE RESPECTED AT BAPTISMS, WEDDINGS, FUNERALS,  
CHILDREN'S SACRAMENTS, RCIA, PARISH MEETINGS, SCHOOL FETE, CHILDREN'S MASSES,  
WEEKEND MASSES, SPORTS DAY?**

### THREE EXAMPLES FROM TODAY'S GOSPEL

We remember the three examples from today's Gospel, that others should find in us as Christians - prophetic, righteous, charitable to the little ones.

Let us ask God to help us to be -

**PROPHETIC** in our welcoming and receiving of people  
(e.g. inclusive, in solidarity, advocates of justice for all, speaking God's Word)

**RIGHTEOUS** in our welcoming and receiving of people  
(integrity instead of patronising, justice instead of scorn and ridicule, in love with God and our neighbour, instead of defensive, respecting the local protocols of identity and relationship to the land)

**CHARITABLE** in our welcoming and receiving of people  
(loving our neighbour and respecting their dignity and rights, practical, and supportive of people to determine their own lives).

Saint Pope John Paul II on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1988 spoke of welcoming and receiving in his Address to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics:

*"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."*

Our Brisbane Archdiocese has begun the process of developing Reconciliation Action Plans, in consultation with Indigenous Elders. With God's Word to inspire us, with open hearts and minds, let us move along the journey of reconciliation. Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Receive and Welcome - NAIDOC Sunday – 2 July 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/070217.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook02072017>]

Other References:

[Indigenous map of Australia](#)

Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Studies

['On the Banks of the Barambah – A History of Cherbourg'](#) Ration Shed Museum, 2013

['Aboriginal Campsites of Greater Brisbane: An Historical Guide'](#) Ray Kerlove, 2015