

JPIC 87 – JUNE 2019

Health in the Lord and the Blessing of the Holy Spirit..[Rule of Saint Albert]
Saudavel iha Maromak no grasa Spirtu Santo Nian .. [Regula Sto Alberto]

'Reconciliation' – Noun or Verb?

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK, 27 MAY – 3 JUNE, 2019

The **Uluru Statement from the Heart** that emerged from the **2017 National Constitutional Convention** reminded the entire Australian nation, both black and white that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under their own laws and customs. Most white Australians acknowledge this truth but sadly many are reluctant to accept the ensuing rights that flow from this fact.

At the heart of reconciliation is the relationship between the broader Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To foster positive race relations, this relationship must be grounded in a foundation of truth. The theme of this year's **Reconciliation Week** is **"Grounded in Truth"**.

In language that those of us from the Catholic tradition should understand, the Statement calls the 'sovereignty' a spiritual notion describing it in these words.

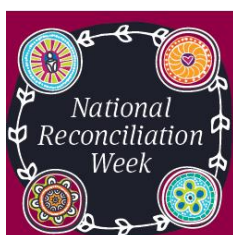
*The ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature',
and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born
therefrom,
remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither
to be united with our ancestors;
this link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.
(Uluru Statement, 2017)*



The Statement reminds us that this sovereignty has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

We know that proportionally that our First Nation's peoples are the most incarcerated on the planet and yet are not innately criminal. Children, not because they are unloved are alienated from their families at an unprecedented rate. Their youth, the hope of the future, languish in detention in obscene numbers.

The Uluru Statement respectfully asks those with political power to bring about reforms that will empower and allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to take a rightful place in their own country by asking for a First Nation Voice to be enshrined in the Australian Constitution.



*In 1967 we were counted; in 2017 we seek to be heard.
We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country.
We invite you to walk with us in a movement
of the Australian people for a better future.
(Uluru Statement, 2017)*

It also calls for the creation of a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations with an emphasis on historical truth-telling. Makarrata captures the aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia. Makarrata offers a better future for upcoming generations based on justice and self-determination.

Professor Megan Davis, Aboriginal Australian activist, human rights lawyer and Professor of Law at the University of New South Wales has said that to allow a way forward to enshrine a 'voice' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution would require Constitutional change, something that can only happen by referendum. Details of the changes would have to be argued by Parliament before being presented to the people for a vote. Though it is two years since these proposals were tabled with government they are yet to be resolved politically.

Reconciliation must transcend Australian political theatre and promote a sense of national unity.

(Pat Dodson, 2016)



Most people had not heard the word Makarrata only becoming familiar with its use following the release of the Uluru Statement. It's a Yolngu word describing a process of conflict resolution, peacemaking and justice and therefore much more than just a synonym for treaty as it might also involve a ceremonial ritual symbolizing the restoration of peace after a dispute. (The Yolngu are an aggregation of indigenous Australians inhabiting north-eastern Arnhem Land.)

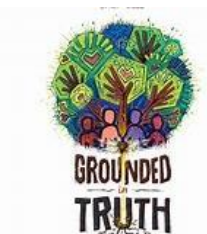
National Reconciliation Week had its beginnings as a Week of Prayer for Reconciliation in 1993 and was supported by Australia's major faith communities. In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launched Australia's first National Reconciliation Week and in 2000, Reconciliation Australia was established to provide national leadership on reconciliation. This year Reconciliation Week commemorates two significant milestones in the journey of reconciliation, the successful 1967 referendum, and the High Court Mabo decision.

In the year 2000, 300,000 people walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge as part of National Reconciliation Week, to show their support for reconciliation.



Reconciliation Australia wants all Australians to appreciate and understand that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Australia's colonial history is characterized by devastating land dispossession, violence and racism. Over the last half-century, however, many significant steps towards reconciliation have been taken. Reconciliation is an ongoing journey that reminds us that while generations of Australians have fought hard for meaningful change, future gains are likely to take just as much, if not more, effort.

In a just and equitable reconciled Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will have the same life chances and choices as non-indigenous children, and the length and quality of a person's life will not be determined by their racial background.



"A reconciled Australia is one where our rights as First Australians are not just respected but championed in all the places that matter..."

(Kirstie Parker – Reconciliation Australia.)

The vision of reconciliation is based and measured on five dimensions: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity and historical acceptance.

Race Relations – That all Australians understand and value indigenous and non-indigenous cultures together with the respective rights and experiences of those cultures. In doing so stronger relationships free of racism are built on trust and respect.

Equality and Equity – That as the unique rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are acknowledged and respected they should also participate equally in a range of opportunities open to all Australians.

Institutional Integrity – The active support of reconciliation by Australia’s political, business, community and faith institutions must be promoted.

Unity – When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and rights are valued and recognized as part of a shared national identity, unity follows.

Historical Acceptance – All Australians must understand and accept the wrongs of the past and their impact. Australia, as a nation makes amends for past policies and practices and ensures that these wrongs are never repeated.

Today, according to the 2018 Australian Reconciliation Barometer, 80% of Australians believe it is important to undertake formal truth-telling processes. Australians, ready to come to terms with our history are taking a crucial step towards a unified future, a future in which we understand, value and respect each other.

Whether we are engaging in challenging conversations or unlearning or relearning what we know, our reconciliation journey requires all of us to walk together with courage. On ‘Sorry Day’, Sunday 26th May and during *National Reconciliation Week*, Monday 27 May to Monday 3rd June, we are mindful of the words of Karen Mundine, Chief Ex. Officer, Reconciliation Australia....



“Reconciliation isn’t a single moment or place in time. It’s lots of small, consistent steps, some big strides, and sometimes unfortunate backward steps.”

A starting point is listening to what Indigenous people themselves tell us about their situation and how they envisage a way forward.

Editor, Peter Thomas has sourced much of this material

from the website of ‘Reconciliation Australia’ - www.reconciliation.org.au

*Today we stand in footsteps millennia old.
May we acknowledge the traditional owners
whose cultures and customs have nurtured,
and continue to nurture,
this land since men and women awoke from the great dream.
We honour the presence of these ancestors
who reside in the imagination of this land
and whose irrepressible spirituality
flows through all creation.*

Jonathan Hill, Aboriginal poet

FOR YOUR CALENDAR

27 May -3 June RECONCILIATION WEEK

4 June - 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, Beijing

5 June – World Environment Day

8 June – World Oceans Day

10 June – 1975 Enactment of the Racial Discrimination Act

12 June – World Day Against Child Labour

15 June – World Elder abuse Awareness Day

16 June – Beginning of National Refugee Week

20 June – World Refugee Day

26 June – International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

26 June – International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

30 June – 1945 Introduction of unemployment benefits in Australia



Anniversary of the Publication of 'Laudato Si'

It's four years since Pope Francis released his encyclical, *Laudato Si* ('On Care for Our Common Home') on May 24, 2015. This might be a good time to re-read the encyclical and consider ways in which we could make positive responses "in the simple daily gestures which break with violence, exploitation and selfishness." (LS230)

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

June 5 is marked by the United Nations as World Environment Day, a day set aside since 1974 to promote "worldwide awareness and action for the protection of our environment." **BEAT PLASTIC POLLUTION** has seen a concerted effort all around the world to beat this problem!

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres urged all people to reject single-use plastic items, and warned that growing levels of plastic waste were becoming unmanageable, saying "every year, more than eight million tons end up in the oceans." Gathered here, a look at some of this plastic waste from the past year, accumulating in waterways, forests, and beaches across the globe, and some of the efforts to clean and recycle the mountains of material.

"As Secretary-General, I have many battles. As a grandfather, the battle against climate change is the battle of my life. It's a battle we're not winning. We need stronger political will and urgent climate action to save our planet and our future."



WE CELEBRATE this BIG STEP with TIMOR LESTE in caring for our planet with this latest news announced on 17 May revealing:

A Recycling solution for Timor-Leste

The Government of Timor-Leste has today signed a memorandum of understanding at the University of Sydney with Mura Technology for the development of a \$US40 million chemical recycling plant that will allow Timor-Leste to become the first 'plastics-neutral' economy in the world. Mura will assist in establishing the chemical recycling plant via a new not-for-profit organisation, RESPECT, at no cost to the people of Timor-Leste. All financial surpluses from the plant will be returned to [support community initiatives](#), as well as developing livelihoods for waste collectors.

Timor-Leste's Secretary of State for the Environment, [Demetrio do Amaral de Carvalho](#), said: "This is an exciting collaboration for us. Not only will it make a big difference in plastic waste reduction and reduce harm to our cherished marine life, but Timor-Leste can be an example to the rest of the world about what this technology can achieve and the benefits it will have for the planet. <https://sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2019/05/17/timor-leste-aims-to-become-world-s-first-plastics-neutral-countr.html>