



*Listen to what the Spirit is saying*

SMOKING CEREMONY AT THE OPENING MASS FOR THE SECOND ASSEMBLY OF THE PLENARY COUNCIL

## TWO SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

On Sunday 3 July we were invited to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday and the beginning of NAIDOC Week. In the early evening before the Opening Mass for the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council began, a smoking ceremony took place in the Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel at North Sydney.

Susan Moylan-Coombs, a Woolwonga and Gurindji woman who lives on Gaimaragal country, gave the Acknowledgement of Country. She then addressed the Plenary Council Assembly:

*How can we move forward together as all people in a sacred way for the future? Not just for us adults but for future generations. We need to lead the way and do things better.*

*My interaction with the Catholic Church was at birth, I was removed, I'm part of the stolen generations.*

*There is much redeeming to be done. So as you move forward, walk beside us and listen to*

*us and experience our spirituality. The smoke that you just saw wafting through this place, that you walked through when you came in, that is part of our cleansing and healing; so is the rain that you walked through as you came into this special place.*

*So it is a time for healing, a time for doing things differently, it is a time for a new beginning and I hope that we can do this together.*

## AN APOLOGY

Anne Frawley-Mangan then introduced herself as 'a descendant of the colonisers who took this land from the traditional owners who never surrendered it.' Anne continued:

*I also acknowledge the part the Catholic Church played in the harms suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and its ignorance of their cultural richness. For these and all wrongs we say sorry.*

*We know we cannot be fully the Church that Jesus wants us to be until First Nations people have made their contribution to the life of the Church*

*and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others within the Church.*

*We commit to continuing to work towards recognition and reconciliation, with visions new and ancient dreaming. Through Christ the wounds of all this world, in God's own peace, will then be healed.*

## RECONCILIATION: HEALING WOUNDS, RECEIVING GIFTS



PLENARY COUNCIL MEMBERS CONSULTATIVE VOTING

The motions to be voted on during the Plenary Council are organised around eight themes. During Session 3 of the Plenary Council on Monday 4 July, within the theme of *Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts*, three motions concerning relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were presented for consultative voting. Following deliberative voting by the bishops, the outcomes were announced on Tuesday 5 July.

(The full text for all of the eight themes is available in *Motions & Amendments 29 June 2022* at <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/>)

Some of the preamble to these motions includes:

19. The Catholic Church in Australia has been caught up in this history of dispossession, Stolen Generations, racism, and the undermining of language and culture. Dioceses and religious orders have made sincere efforts to share faith, education and pastoral services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, much suffering has been inflicted by the historically misguided attempts of those who were ignorant of the cultural richness of these peoples.
20. We know that we will not be "fully the Church that Jesus wants" us to be until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made their contribution to the life of the Church and "until that contribution has been joyfully received by others" within the Church.

## THREE MOTIONS PASSED BY THE PLENARY COUNCIL ON 5 JULY

### Motion 1.1

22. Therefore, this Plenary Council:

- a. says sorry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in and beyond the Church for the part played by the Church in the harms they have suffered;
- b. commits to walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in continuing to work towards recognition, reconciliation and justice;
- c. joyfully receives and accepts the recommendations contained in the NATSICC position paper "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church";
- d. endorses the Uluru Statement from the Heart and encourages engagement with processes for implementing the statement, including local, regional and national truth-telling efforts.

### Motion 1.2

That each Catholic school, parish, diocese, eparchy or organisation respond to the recommendations contained in the NATSICC position paper "Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church" in at least the following ways:

- a. acknowledging in a prominent and appropriate manner the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which their buildings stand;
- b. including the online Cultural Competency in a Catholic Context course developed by NATSICC and approved by the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the orientation and/or ongoing formation of staff and volunteers to enable more effective and appropriate ministry;
- c. ensuring that any retreats and other formation activities offered are culturally appropriate;
- d. working actively to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on its committees, boards and decision-making bodies.

### Motion 1.3

That the advisory councils of the Bishops Commission for Liturgy, in partnership with NATSICC, develop options for the liturgically and culturally appropriate use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols and rituals in Catholic liturgical contexts, with respect for the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.