

Today we celebrate and mark Aboriginal and Torres Islander Sunday. We celebrate the rich cultural heritage of the original peoples of this great land. Sadly, the history of European settlement over two centuries largely overlooked and in many cases forcibly wrenched culture, language and land from the original inhabitants, the First Australians. This legacy of dispossession has left our indigenous sisters and brothers in a state of impoverishment.

Each year the Australian bishops put out a statement to coincide with this Sunday. In this year's statement, "Solidarity: On the Road to Justice", we read:

A priest in a remote town gathers a number of Aboriginal women from the local parish and hands out holy cards with images of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Guatemala, Our Lady Queen of Peace and others. He wants them to choose an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary that appeals to them. It is his intention to purchase a statue for the church according to their wishes. And what do they choose? Noting less than an image of the Pieta, of Mary seated with the broken body of her son cradled in her arms. And why that one? Because that is an image that they know firsthand, from experience. Suicide, car accidents, violence, drugs, lack of good health, dangerous habits. All of these causes have taken their toll among Aboriginal people in Australia, to a degree that might be describe as horrific, scandalous, a most critical state of affairs and nothing less than a national shame.

In today's gospel we hear Jesus exclaim: 'A prophet is only despised in his own country', and sadly, he could work no miracle in his home town because of their lack of faith. We have so much to gain from our recognition of the wisdom of the First Australians, and yet this wisdom is so often ignored.

The message of St Paul in the second reading has been summed up in the following maxim: "May grace be enough for you: my power is at best in weakness." It is from the position of weakness, not dominance, that God can come to our aid. All Australian's need to be in solidarity with one another, sharing our giftedness, and ultimately relying on God's grace rather than on human manipulation to pull us through the difficult and challenging times.

***Peace & blessings,
Gerard***