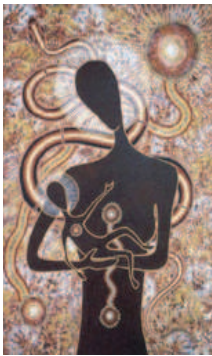


**ABORIGINAL LITURGY
CONFERENCE
CONFERENCE OUTCOMES
JUNE 2013**



**Hosted by the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry,
Sydney Archdiocese**



Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Sydney Archdiocese

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Dear friends,

In June 2013, the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Sydney hosted a liturgy conference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics employed in ministry. The area of liturgy and our experiences in the Catholic Church is something that comes up regularly in discussions amongst ourselves and it seemed timely to bring people together to work through some of the issues we face.

In particular, I believe that it is crucial that those of us who are working on liturgies from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective come together and talk about the current situation for Aboriginal culture in the Church in general as well as in liturgies. In many places the impact of the new translation, for example, has been detrimental and we are seeing cultural practices being wound back or stopped all together, despite being accepted in many places for decades. 2013 is the 40th Anniversary of the first approved Aboriginal Mass, the Missa Kimberley, which was first used in 1973. We have also been hearing much discussion of late about the 50th anniversary of Vatican II. This anniversary provides an opportunity to consider the Church's instructions on culture and faith, what we now call inculturation. From an Aboriginal perspective I can see no conflict between what the Church teaches and what we as Aboriginal Catholics are calling for, and yet too often we meet with resistance from the mainstream church.

My hope for this gathering was that it would provide a space to share what we are all doing as well as to openly discuss the challenges and obstacles we face in our work and together find ways to address them.

As Aboriginal Catholic Ministries we rarely have the opportunity to come together and affirm each other as well as share our ideas. It is important that we come together to strengthen our ACM networks and support each other in our work.

I think we achieved all that we set out to achieve at this gathering. We shared our stories and our expertise. We threw some great ideas on the table and reminded ourselves of ideas that have been around for many decades but which need some fresh energy to move them forward. We made some decisions about where we should focus our attention after the conference and, importantly, we also enjoyed time together to refresh ourselves away from our everyday pressures.

This document is a record of the conference and summarises the sessions we engaged in during the conference. It is largely unedited and simply presents the opinions and thoughts that came out of the sessions. In time other documents will be written explaining specific areas further. Tasks have been allocated and work has already begun on implementing some of the recommendations arising from our meeting.

I would like to thank the participants who were able to come to the gathering. I would also like to thank the Sydney Archdiocese for supporting the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and enabling us to host the gathering.

Yours in JMJ,

Graeme Mundine
Executive Officer, ACM, Sydney Archdiocese

THINGS WE DO

The first session of the conference was all about celebrating the great things that Aboriginal Catholics are doing in their various ministries. Recognising the diverse and rich contributions that they make to the life of the Church and the lives of the people who connect to these ministries. Loosely arranged into groups these are the things that people shared from the varied activities of their ministries.

Sacraments and liturgies

- Sacramental programs
- Baptisms
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Eucharistic Services - Elderly/Rights of the sick and dying
- Aboriginal masses
- Incorporate as many symbols as possible into Mass/Event
- Smoking Ceremonies
- Community water blessings
- Aboriginal spirituality
- Develop liturgies - liturgical seasons and significant Aboriginal dates
- Masses for specific events i.e. NAIDOC mass, All Souls Day
- Honour and pray for those massacred
- Aboriginal Deacon does everything but Mass: communion service to the Aged/respice, visiting communities around the Cape, hospitals, Wontulp Bi Buya College, schools, Catholic Colleges
- Participation in Religious ceremonies in some places
- Aboriginal Acolyte - assists Mass, Baptism/Prep



Community

- Community Group Meetings
- Build new relationships
- Recognition of needs
- Good relations in Aboriginal communities

Schools

- Connecting schools with ministry
- Increased numbers of Aboriginal students in schools
- Talks in Schools
- Support School Para liturgies
- Opening the Doors Foundation (<http://www.openingthedoors.org.au>)
- Educate Teachers, general public, students - retreats, cultural education and go back to country
- Catholic Education Office - cultural competencies
- Participate in schools events, i.e. harmony day, sorry day, reconciliation, Mabo Day, Aboriginal Children's day etc.
- Fire carriers program - proud race (<http://www.openingthedoors.org.au/friends-igniting-reconciliation-through-education>).

Cultural awareness

- Sharing knowledge
- Sharing traditions
- Acknowledgements and Welcomes
- Evangelising\stewardship
- Education of non-Aboriginal people, youth, community
- Educating Parishes/Priests
- Raising awareness - schools, communities, government
- Speakers program - across Diocese.
- Recognition by Diocese of the need for a cultural awareness program for teachers and parishes
- Mandatory training for teachers 12.5 hours of professional development
- Writer in residence - readings, cultural interpretation of Masses
- Stories told in newsletters and art - and more not said.
- Contribute to written missions/statements
- Kids - leadership camps



Resources

- Personal knowledge
- Prayers, liturgies, stories from ACMs around the country
- People, elders, leaders, educators, priests, Aboriginal Catholic communities, Deacons
- Create and use symbols: crosses, rosaries, message stones, message sticks, coolamons, dilly bag, head bands, prayer cards, DVDs, Mass books, Plaques, Aboriginal prayers and reflections for schools and other places
- Art Work
- Websites
- Indigenous honour roll
- Non-Indigenous friends and partners
- Events/Happenings e.g. Mass for 1000 young people in Sydney Archdiocese
- Immersion programs
- Exhibitions
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Masses

Relationships

- Good networks with religious organisations
- Gifted with volunteers from different religious groups
- Work with other agencies: Catholic Care, St Vincent's etc.
- Inclusion in CERO
- Link Community to Church/social Justice/volunteering and outreach
- Voice to Aboriginal people
- Recognition of the need for Aboriginal ministry
- State Council - Aboriginal reps from each Diocese
- Share resources with schools, parishes, religious orders

Financial Resources

- Fundraising
- Funds to create resources

Concerns

- Diocese websites - no presence in official sites (in some places).
- Reactive vs. proactive



VATICAN II AND INCULTURATION

Graeme Mundine led a session which looked at how the idea of inculturation had developed since Vatican II and the implications for Aboriginal people in Australia.

Vatican II contained a promise of radical hope for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The issues of culture and the nature of missionary work set out the Church's thinking and led to deeper thinking and discussion on issues such as inculturation.

"Let them share in cultural and social life by the various exchanges of human living. Let them be familiar with their national traditions, gladly and reverently laying bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden in them".
Ad Gentes 11



In *Gaudium et Spes* the idea that culture and Gospel can be in communion with each other was addressed.

"The Church, sent to all peoples of every time and place, is not bound exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, nor to any particular way of life or any customary pattern of living, ancient or recent. Faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too". *G.S.* 58

"Pope John Paul II explained inculturation signifies "an intimate transformation of the authentic cultural values by their integration into Christianity and the implantation of Christianity into different human cultures".

John Paul II, encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio* Dec 7, 1990, No 52. AAS 83 (1991) 300

People going out to spread the Word should...

"[K]now the people among who they live, and should establish contact with them. Thus they themselves can learn by sincere and patient dialogue to understand what treasures a bountiful God has distributed among the nations of the earth. But at the same time, let them try to illumine these treasures with the light of the gospel to set them free, and to bring them under the dominion of the God their saviour". *AG* 11

"...by inculturation, the church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. On the one hand the penetration of the Gospel into a given socio-cultural milieu "gives inner fruitfulness to the spiritual qualities and gifts proper to each people... strengthens these qualities, perfects them and restores them in Christ.

On the other hand, the church assimilates these values, when they are compatible with the Gospel, to "deepened understanding of Christ's message and give it more effective expression in the liturgy and in the many different aspects of the life of the community of believers".

Instruction: Inculturation and the Roman Liturgy Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, March 29, 1994



"The work of inculturation will usually be done by those to whom the new forms for expressing the substance of the faith are co-natural, "part of their own cultural patrimony"

Francis George commenting on the General Synod 1977 (first official use of the term inculturation).

In 1969 Pope Paul VI addressed African Catholic Bishops and stressed that "First, your Church must be first of all Catholic" but he went on to say:

"The expression, that is, the language and mode of manifesting this one Faith, may be manifold; hence, it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius, and the culture of one who professes this one Faith".

Pope Paul VI Address to the bishops of African meeting in Kampala, Uganda, July 31 1969 as quoted in George :52.

As Graham Paulson says the tendency is to start with principles: "...already shaped within a western denominational enculturation - and then asking what they mean for Indigenous people... There has been very little theological reflection that begins from an Indigenous mindset and engages more directly with biblical theologies and practices".

G. Paulson, Towards an Aboriginal Spirituality, Pacifica 2006 19

RECOGNITION THE WAY FORWARD

In 1993, the Australian Catholic Bishop's Social Justice Sunday Statement was, for the first time, written by Aboriginal people. The statement was called *Recognition: the Way Forward*. Although published as a Bishops' statement it was written by Aboriginal people for a non-Indigenous audience. Twenty years later it is timely to consider whether the hope and vision that was expressed in that statement has come to life.



The participants were asked to read the statement and then in small groups talk about the things that stood out for them. The following is their response as they either identified quotes or ideas that jumped out from the document or made general observations. The page numbers refer to the original documents and italicised phrases are direct quotes.

Overview

- "Most of the disappointment is in the fact that here is another document being written about us again! Why don't they read what's already written?"
- "We are not children - we have grown up" (ref. page 33)
- "The question must be in the context of two areas - development and leadership of Aboriginal people who are Catholic and the Aboriginal people at large" (ref page 32).
- "We need to be viewed as part of the church not outside".
- *I don't really expect whites to understand Aboriginal people I don't think many will ever really accept us. But at least they should recognise us as people* (ref page 7).
- "I only stand straight happy proud and not ashamed of my colour because I still have land. I can paint, dance, create, and sing as my ancestors did before me. This is what our liturgy should be. God gave us our laws - which are written in our hearts and minds - relationships to land, people, and history".



Preparing the soil

- We need to "Prepare the Way" first:
- *And so this year, the year of the Worlds Indigenous people we must all take the opportunity to prepare the soil so that listening hearts can hear our message* (Ref Page 2).
- "We need good soil/seed provided. Are we preparing the soil and enabling this to happen?"
- "This land needs healing; the church can provide a space to enable this to happen. Pouring of Jesus blood over this land. We need Unity and Solidarity".

History

- "You can't separate Culture from history and how it currently affects law/land rights/church structure/ racism etc."
- "Can't understand where we are at without understanding history."
- "The quote from Gordon Briscoe on page 9 supports the text on page 39".
- "Non-Aboriginal people are still telling stories about us".
- "Aboriginal people = living history."

Aboriginal Identity

- "Aboriginal identity (ref p2) - Not changed but now need to prove identity and others have stereotyped view on colour."
- "No recognition of Aboriginal people as different to other cultural groups".



Respect and recognition

- "Not clearly enough evidenced in practice and action"

Racism and Guilt

- "Institutional within church"
- "Need education of current and new Australians"
- "Pope John Paul II comments on the impact of the Missionaries . It was dependent on personalities" (ref page 26).
- "Excuses why we haven't done anything".
- "People don't want to feel guilt".
- "Reverse racism".
- "Dealing with Stereotypes - i.e. get houses, gov. pay fees".
- "Told Aboriginal people need to move on".

Church Collections and Land

- "Artefacts in Rome - we should get them back and build a Museum in Australia".
- "Treasures and land and bones bring them back to Australian Aborigines".
- "Church land was given for the benefit to Aboriginal people - where is the benefit? Where/ to whom /what is benefit to Aboriginal people?" (ref page 32).



Aboriginal Rights

- "Land rights - constantly moving the goal posts".
- "Self-determination"
- "Culture is alive - language, religion, symbols and ceremony".
- "Use education to get rights."

Pope John Paul II

- "Petition given to the Pope in 1986 was never responded to".
- "Dignity of your culture which land story, dance, and ceremonial spirituality was often the message of the Holy Father. Culture should not be lost (ref page 25) - Is this lip service? How is this supported in Church Services"?
- "Are they waiting for Christ to tell them personally to be Christians to Aboriginal people" (ref page 40)

Action

- "What is the way forward"?
- "How has it been achieved"?
- "Need to have an audit of achievements - progression in 20 years".
- "Language must be appropriate to the audience (when writing these documents)".
- "This document needs to be updated or another document to follow".
- "Much of what is written in this document is still current today".
- "Time to write an action plan "document" for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics".
- "Reference to the challenge providing resources - land rights, self-determination" (ref page 33).
- Call to action reconciliation (schools, parishes, communities) (ref page 28).

NATSICC

- "Build leadership in Church" (ref page 33).
- "How many Aboriginal people in leadership in positions"?
- "Need Aboriginal positions and control progress".



WHAT IS OUR VISION OF AN ABORIGINAL CATHOLIC CHURCH?

In this session the question was asked "If we had no limits and could create a Church of our dreams what would it look like"? Because some of the ideas were specific to one place, rather than summarise the ideas, we left them in groups as they were presented.

Group one - We want...

- An Aboriginal rite - we don't want to break away, but we do want to do things our way. We can have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Church but still tied to Rome.
- An Aboriginal style of Mass, Baptism, Funeral, Confirmation, Reconciliation.
- Better educated Mainstream church - making mainstream put words into actions.
- Aboriginal Church leadership - this may include married and/or women Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priests.
- Our own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Church calendar - tied to the seasons.
- Recognition that we have our own way of doing things and that we are already doing them and they have become tradition. E.g. the Aboriginal Our Father, we have been using this for 40 years -it's now our tradition.
- An Aboriginal Creed and a Eucharistic prayer.
- To look at other options such as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ordinariate.
- To use our songs and instruments
- To use our languages
- To use our vestments, mitres, chasubles, dalmatic, etc.
- To dance the stories.
- To go right back and write our history down.

Group two - We want...

- A Church up on a hill.
- The church to donate our own ecumenical space that has multi-faceted rooms (camp fire, gardens etc.).
- Look like an ecumenical church - no restrictions for Aboriginal people. We see ourselves as a Christian person deep in our Aboriginal spirituality rather than denominational.
- A building that would be good for all people that people can exercise their rights.
- To embrace our culture - inclusive - welcoming. - Somewhere that is these things.
- To celebrate in our own way e.g. weddings, baptisms, burials.
- To use symbols and signs - but are respectful of what church symbols are.
- To contextualise the scriptures - it's done in the Top End - but not really moving south.
- Our lay ministries to be recognised - youth, elders, women.
- Recognition for a selected Aboriginal symbol which will grow as each sacramental steps are taken. Our responsibility for community baptism - like initiation- involves everyone. It's a journey song.
- The sacraments to be fitting in the Aboriginal way and bring it back to community. If you want any sacraments done in our area you have to be affiliated with one particular church - unwelcoming and sterile. Language is not fitting for us.
- Freedom to be able to express, walk proud and walk tall.
- To exercise our right for Liturgy to be culturally appropriate for us
- Sacraments to be held outside - round the camp fire, around the beach, not restricted.
- To decorate with appropriate symbols.
- A bus!
- Parking for all peoples
- Lay ministries - Encourage the youth - allow them to assist with the sacraments.

- Cultural training for non-Indigenous church leaders i.e. Priests coming in from India and other places. We need some sort of agreement before those people enter into communities - no understanding or community welcoming those people in.
- The ACM to play a major role in servicing these needs. Church needs to accept it and pay for it!

Group three - We want...

- We want to be recognised and acknowledged.
- We want Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bishops and priests. One participant said the most powerful thing when happened when she went to an Anglican service with Bishops James Leftwich, Saibo Mabo and Arthur Malcolm. She just cried - she had never experienced it before.
- Women having stronger roles within the church.
- Spiritual healing.
- More community involvement in the ACM.
- Celebrations in language - dance song paintings.
- Sacred Space.
- Celebrate seasons according to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.
- We can be Catholic and Aboriginal - we bought a ticket on the bus.
- Male and female priests - no celibacy
- Female Pope and She's Black and living in Australia
- Our whole celebration is inculturalised and celebrations in our church - truly Aboriginal. Very open and welcoming (we will let in White people in).
- Some churches handed over to Aboriginal people and have a truly Australian church.

Group four - We want...

- The same Dream we have always wanted.
- Unity and harmony with the cross in the middle.
- To engage our local communities in our ACMS - Pope Francis said get out of the church and go to the people.
- ACM, NATSICC, AICCs to remain.
- National youth congress, supported and sits on their own. They pick their elder to mentor them.
- Financial support - not just for three years -rolling, continuous.
- Traditional symbols inside our church
- Our own vestments etc. We feel so proud when the Priest is wearing the vestments.
- The a national fire carriers program - program breaks down reconciliation myths.
- Masses to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander significant days - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander childrens' day etc.
- Increase understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rituals on the liturgy commission - we are always being told "liturgy is incorrect"
- Open acceptance of ACM liturgies.
- More clergy and religious - they can be married.
- More Eucharistic ministers there are few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander altar servers.
- A female pope and then a saint!
- To take the church out to the people. Look at the other churches.
- The church filled up with blackfellas - not just when it's NAIDOC, when you die, or when you marry.
- Church of the future takes shape every day. "Our church is a bureaucracy - supposed to be the richest church, but I think it's poorest. Its soul is locked away in the Vatican".

WHERE IS OUR FOCUS?

Taking all the thinking from the previous session the question was then asked - "What do you want the most?" Participants were asked to identify, out of all the ideas that came up in the previous session, the three things they most wanted to see immediate action on. The notes were then grouped together and everyone was asked to tick the group they had the most energy for working on. The clear area identified as the priority was the group that included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liturgies, symbols and culture.



AN EASTERN ABORIGINAL LITURGY

A important point, emphasised often, throughout this conference is the inconsistency of experiences that Aboriginal Catholics encounter. In some places Aboriginal Catholics are 'allowed' to incorporate culture into liturgies. It was also noted that in schools and outside of Churches Aboriginal culture is more readily incorporated into liturgies. However, in other places no Aboriginal cultural expression is allowed. It is clear that the acceptance of Aboriginal culture in the liturgy is dependent on the good will of particular priests and/or Bishops in each place.

Observations were also made that in some parts of Australia, in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, for example, there has been more progress in incorporating Aboriginal languages, symbols and other aspects of culture. For example, the Missa Kimberley, appropriate to the Kimberley area, was approved in 1973. However, in the Eastern States there has been less support and recognition for similar endeavours.

What Aboriginal Catholics want to see is uniformity so that they are all able to include aspects of culture into the Mass without having to rely on the benevolence of particular priests and/or Bishops, or having to consistently engage in debate with liturgists.

Recognising that, despite many barriers, across the country Aboriginal people have been putting their stamp on the liturgy for decades it was decided to propose an Aboriginal liturgy that is based on the Roman Rite. During the conference the group spent time adapting the Order of the Mass to include those things that have been accepted and used for a very long time. It was also recognised that only the Eastern States were represented at the conference and there were no Torres Strait Islander people present. Therefore it was proposed to seek agreement for an Aboriginal liturgy that is relevant to Aboriginal Catholics in the Eastern States. Having an agreed format that sets out accepted practice, while allowing for regional variations would avoid many of the issues that so many ACMs are encountering.

A copy of the proposed "Instructions for the use of Aboriginal Culture in the Mass" is available at individual ACM websites or at www.aboriginalrite.org.

THE WAY FORWARD...

“We want change we want acceptance”.

This conference, as many have before, raised some significant issues about how Aboriginal people are able to express themselves as Catholics and their experiences of Church. There are still many issues that need to be addressed such as the use of culture, signs and symbols in liturgies, leadership, celibacy and seasonal calendars. There are also issues which need to be addressed such as racist and ill informed behaviours from the mainstream that continue to isolate and exclude Aboriginal people from participating in the full life of the Church.

It was decided that a good starting place to address these issues at this time was to call for an Eastern Aboriginal Liturgy. This was seen as a step on the way to a fuller dialogue about the need for an Eastern Aboriginal Catholic Rite and what that Rite might entail.

Conference participants unanimously requested three people to represent them on this issue to NATSICC, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and to other interested parties in order to further action and discussion on this issue. The people nominated were Ravina Waldren, Vicki Clark and Graeme Mundine. They were specifically asked to work on a submission/proposal to take to the Bishops and NATSICC and ask for action. They were also asked to form a working party with three other people (to be confirmed) to continue working on outcomes of this conference.

Other agreed Conference outcomes include:

- Producing a matrix of symbols with both Christian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols.
- Research history and collate information
- Collect prayers to be made available to all
- Improve communication resources

The need to find financial support to hold further gatherings such as this liturgy conference was also identified. The conversation about what matters to Aboriginal Catholics must continue.

Finally, it should be noted that the conference participants addressed a letter which has been circulated from NATSICC in response to a petition to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) arising from the 2012 NATSICC Assembly. The petition asked to be able to use signs and symbols in the liturgy. NATSICC has asked for responses. The group noted that the time line given for responses in the letter was unrealistic but that the request for an Eastern Aboriginal Liturgy and further discussion about an Aboriginal Rite was their response. The group also noted that it wanted NATSICC to take the proposed Eastern Aboriginal Liturgy to the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference.

The group also agreed that each individual present needed to be proactive and talk about the outcomes of this meeting in each of their situations and communities. Every person needs to start a conversation.

For further information and to join the discussion please contact aboriginalrite@gmail.com or go to:

www.aboriginalrite.org

www.acmsydney.org.