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Australia Day - 26 January 2024

Angela McCarthy

Vincent Glynn

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26 January 2024

Australia Day

Reflection by Angela McCarthy
Introductions by Vincent Glynn

Introduction

Australia Day is not a feast or a solemnity in the calendar of the church. Nonetheless we are encouraged to gather as Australians and as a Church to pray. As we gather, we are mindful of the first inhabitants of this land. We ask forgiveness for our failings as a people and nation knowing that God is always merciful. We pray and express our thanks for the blessings that we enjoy as the inhabitants of this country and ask for the grace we need to live our faith in our day to day life.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came that we might value all the gifts of creation. Lord have mercy.

You came to show us how to serve the world. Christ have mercy.

You came to bring the message of peace. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Isaiah 32:15-18

The prophet reflects on God's power to turn the wilderness into productive land, able to sustain human life. This is the result of God's justice coming to dwell in the wilderness of people's lives, of people's hearts.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 84:9-14. R. cf. v. 9

The Lord speaks of peace to his people.

This psalm is the response from the people asking to be returned to God's favour. Mercy and faithfulness have met and justice and peace have embraced.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

God, who is spirit, is the source of all the gifts of nature and of grace that we enjoy. The gifts we each receive are not for us only to enjoy, but for us to put them at the service of the common good.

or

Romans 12:9-13

This reading spells out some of the characteristics of the true Christian: genuine love, eagerness to show others honour, zeal in God's service, joyful hope, patience, persevering prayer, active care for the needy.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:2-12

Jesus' proclamation of what constitutes true happiness means that we have to rethink our ideas about what can bring us to happiness.

or Luke 12:22-32

Jesus' message in this gospel passage does not translate as 'Do not be concerned' but as 'Do not worry'. Concern comes from the Christian outlook on life and people; worry indicates a lack of trust in God's concern for us.

Reflection

This celebration of Australia Day will be for some people a day of great sadness since the loss of the referendum last October. Deep feelings of betrayal, neglect and distress could well be evident in people's behaviour. The Collect for today's Mass asked that, as the Cross that shines in our southern skies, so may Christ bring light to our nation, to its people old and new. There will be many people who perhaps will not be able to see that light. Being aware of the pain in our community will help us to be compassionate. The Plenary Council unanimously passed a decree accepting the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full so as Church, we must find a way for that to become a healthy reality.

Isaiah reflects on a time when the spirit will be poured out on the land once more and it shall be transformed. In this time of climate change, and ever more dangerous natural responses to that change, we can certainly pray earnestly for that time so that people will live 'in a peaceful home, in safe houses, in quiet dwellings'. The way to bring this about is through justice. The cause of wars is social injustice and that is absolutely evident today. Another issue that we continue to battle is the scourge of domestic violence. Our efforts to help in a positive way and to educate our children and ourselves that no violence is to be tolerated, becomes ever more important. Maybe then our homes will be safe.

The psalm is a prayer for the restoration of God's favour on Israel. The psalms are wonderful prayers to God and about God. We hear the cry 'Will you be angry with us forever?' and yet God's anger is but for a moment. God will give what is good and our land will increase its yield, but that can only come when we walk the right paths and share the benefits with all our brothers and sisters.

In the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul was speaking to a group of people who were very diverse in every possible way. Living together in their diversity was not

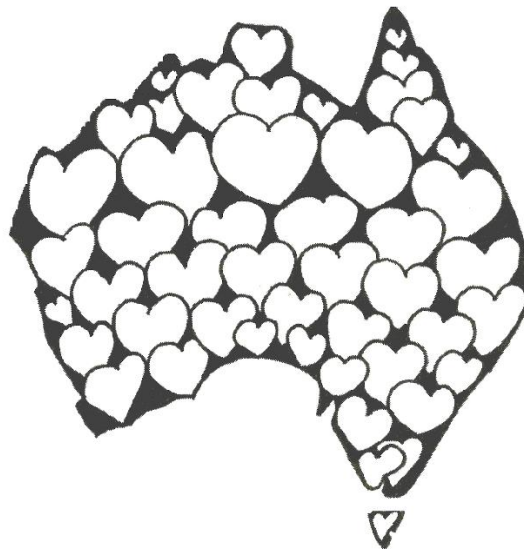
easy and so Paul points out the different gifts of the Spirit that will help them build community. We can reflect too on the different gifts that the Spirit has given us all and how that difference can be bound together by our willingness to respect the gifts of others and not see our own gift as being more worthy.

The alternative reading is from Romans where Paul calls us to sincerity in our actions. Not political gain, or one-upmanship, but real hospitality to all our brothers and sisters. Dare we dream that for Australia today? That people of all nations shall find a place to be safe, to have quiet dwellings.

The gospel choices are the Beatitudes from Matthew's gospel or Luke 12 where we here that God cares about every bird but cares about us so much more so we should not worry about what to wear or what to eat and drink. Care only about the things that are important to God.

Both of these gospels stand in stark contrast to what is happening in Australia today. We spend so much of our time making sure that we are fed and clothed in the most appropriate way and yet we throw 92 million tons of clothing into landfill. How can we justify this in a time when so many go without, so many are hungry, and greed for power has caused immense damage to too many countries.

As with the Beatitudes, it is our attitude to life that is of prime importance. We must know that Australians are among the most wealthy in the world and yet our indigenous people are still struggling to survive and we have not closed the gap in their health, life expectancy or education as had been promised. There are many other families that are struggling too and yet we can still be so wasteful. We have to have the spiritual virtues of being poor in spirit, being pure of heart, being peacemakers, being persecuted for the cause of right, and hungering and thirsting after justice and then Australia will be a place that can accept the kingdom of heaven.



Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As Australians, blessed with many things, we turn to God and ask for the things that we really need for justice and peace to flourish.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Australian Church that they honour the work of the Plenary Council and fully accept the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the political and economic leaders of Australia. May their minds and hearts be opened to the real needs of people, not just the ones that are politically and economically valuable.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who suffer on Australia Day because of the injustices that they feel. May the Spirit open all our minds and hearts to the ways of justice and peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who care for the land and provide us with food. May they find the land blessed with fertility as they care for it in sustainable ways.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are sick and seeking help. May our health system find ways to bring all our people to health including those in remote and regional areas.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who have died defending our Australian freedom. May they rest in eternal peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for refugees and asylum seekers that our 'boundless plains' will become a place of peace for them to dwell.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of justice and peace, we know in faith that you will answer all our prayers through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA
A blessing hymn for Australia			655	
Advance Australia fair			656	
Christ, our Lord, the prince of ages		644	399	
Come, Holy Ghost, creator, come		654	382	376
For Australia			545	
God of peace	138		546	553
Help of Christians, guard this land		711	429	
Lord of earth and all creation			545	554
Make me a channel of your peace	126	793	555	490
The Beatitudes (Kearney)		817	456	489
The Beatitudes (Russian Orthodox Chant)			563	
Veni, Creator Spiritus		851	390	373

Title	AOVNG	S&S2
Gift of grace	49	
Lord, show us your mercy and love		265

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 84: *The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

	CWB
Psalm 84	483

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Hearts on fire (SHOF/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]