

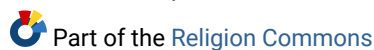
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Celebrating Australia Day: Unwrapping "The Great Southland of the Holy Spirit"

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Celebrating Australia Day

Unwrapping "The Great Southland of the Holy Spirit"

by Russell Hardiman

Introduction

To coincide with his arrival in Australia on Sunday July 13th 2008, the Vatican has arranged to release *The official message to Australians from Pope Benedict XVI*. He called Australia the "great southern land of the Holy Spirit" (sic). This caused some interesting responses amongst commentators in the media about the provenance of this title and who used it first. The Perth *Sunday Times*, under the by-line of Tony Vermeer in Sydney, claimed "THE Pope has christened Australia the "great southern land of the Holy Spirit", as if the Pope had invented the phrase. The initial consternation of the journalist was perhaps further aggravated by the use of the same phrase by Cardinal Pell in the Opening Mass on July 15th.

Following his arrival in Australia on Shepherd One, Pope Benedict XVI's use of this title immediately caused a quandary in media circles concerning from where came the new name he gave Australia by calling it "the great southern land of the Holy Spirit".

The dearth of knowledge amongst media commentators, is a glaring illustration of the Anglophile interpretation of history that makes the British connections the dominant theme of Australian history. Maybe Pope Benedict's first gesture in Australia can encourage us all, seeing how he is not a devotee of John Paul II's trade mark gesture of kissing the sacred ground of each country he visited. Perhaps unwittingly the Pope has given us all the invitation to reflect on an historical era when appeals to the Bishop of Rome came to be the equivalent of international law of that time. One by product of this process was the Papal Demarcation Line, down the Atlantic Ocean by which his predecessor, Alexander VI in 1493, divided the recently discovered New World between the Portuguese and Spanish kingdoms. The Pope gave them the *Ius Patronatus* or the right of patronage to proclaim the Gospel in the newly discovered lands. The consequence of this grandiose action was to divide the world into two parts with the Spanish to have access to the Western Hemisphere and the Portuguese, the Eastern Hemisphere. This led to the West Indies being the Spanish world and the East Indies being the Portuguese world. The vestige of this is still obvious, especially in the 129th Longitude as the boundary of Western Australia from the 135th Longitude claimed in the coastal exploration of Captain Cook in 1770. This territory he claimed as New South Wales and it now constitutes the six Eastern States.

The papal encouragement to missionary activity gave rise to seek to evangelise the newly discovered islands and the land masses that were the hope of the colonial powers. One dimension of this trend was calling the presumed unknown land mass in the southern zones "The Great Southland of the Holy Spirit" as if Pedro de Quiros had then reached what we acknowledge now as the Australian continent,

when in fact he had only reached what is called Vanuatu, a substantial distance from Australia.

The vision of Pedro de Quiros

Over the years in this journal we have had occasion to publish several articles dealing with the explorer's claim by Pedro de Quiros.¹ He was the Portuguese explorer, but sailing for the King of Spain in 1605-6, who fulfilled his life ambition in discovering what he presumed to be the mythical southern land presumed since the time of Ptolemy in pre-Christian Greece. The mathematician and Greek philosopher became famous across the centuries for his presupposition that there had to be a land mass in the Southern Hemisphere to balance the weight of the known land masses of the Northern Hemisphere.² For centuries, the speculation and the imaginative drawings at the foot of any world map projection of the known world was overwritten as *Terra Australis nondum cognita* (The Southland not yet known).

Part 1: The historical perspective

Its challenge to live it

The scope of this article will be to delineate the vision of de Quiros for the mythical southern land and how his faith and zeal for evangelising this unknown world can be traced in the published journal of one of the Franciscan chaplains on his fleet of ships. These ideas can serve as something of a matrix embracing four centuries to explore the evangelical vision that drove his endeavours and naïve hopes for missioning the area.³

The dream of de Quiros

Quiros had a great vision which can still serve a purpose by way of providing us with a paradigm whose numerous insights become the material we examine as to how fully has been the implementation of the hopes of de Quiros for "The Great Southland of the Holy Spirit".⁴

In the very flowery language of the day, magnified in its original Spanish culture, *The Journal of Fray Martin de Munilla ofm* provides us with descriptions of the various elaborate rituals that transform the intention of claiming possession of the newly discovered land into the patronage of the sovereign country promoting the voyage of exploration.

The proclamation of the Southland

The following text is only one paragraph of six that make up the formal proclamation in the Spanish Hemisphere that the newly discovered land was to come under the Patronage Right (*Ius Patronatus*) from the days of the Papal Demarcation whereby Spain and Portugal had evangelisation rights in the two Hemispheres of the world:

May the heavens, the earth and the waters with all the creatures thereof be my witnesses, as also all ye creatures here present, how I, Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, in these parts which have hitherto been unknown, in

*the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the Eternal Father and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, true God and true Man, erect this sign of the Holy Cross on which His Person was crucified and whereon He gave His life for the ransom and remedy of the whole human race. Pedro Fernandez de Quiros. 'In these parts of the South, hitherto unknown, where I have come with the permission and approval of the Sovereign Roman Pontiff, Clement VIII, and by order of King Philip III, King of the Spains, dispatched by the Council of State, I, Captain Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, in the name of the Most Holy Trinity, take possession of all these islands and lands which I have newly discovered and wish to discover as far as the Pole. I take possession of all these parts as far as the Pole in the name of Jesus Christ, Saviour of all men, however unknown they may be...'*⁵

A single paragraph of this flowery style was not enough for de Quiros. He then proceeds to reproduce the formal claim of possession of all these parts of the South as far as the Pole in the name of all of the religious orders who were members of his ships' crews. Four equally elaborate paragraphs repeat the language of the paragraph cited above.

I take possession of all these parts of the South as far as the Pole in the name of John of God and of all the professed brethren of his Order, that they themselves may found, administer and maintain with the charity of their religious profession all the hospitals which are to be set up in these parts, and which are so necessary in order that the natives may grow attached to all our ways and have for us the devotion and love merited by the sight of what our people endure for them, and the care with which they tend their sick and the other benefits conferred on them.

By way of explanation I should add here that the name of John of God refers to the Spanish founder of that Order before he was canonised as St John of God, and was used as the spiritual mentor of the Irish nuns of that same name, so prominent in the St John of God Health Care in their thirteen hospitals across Australia.⁶

The Proclamation of Quiros goes even further in referring to the land he presumed to be the mainland. In the style of the Spanish tradition, he had christened islands discovered by naming them for the saint or saints, the feast, or the title of Our Lady celebrated that day on the liturgical calendar. Thus, on what we now know as the island of Vanuatu, he called the mainland *La Australia del Espiritu Santo* (The Southland of the Holy Spirit) because it was claimed on the Feast of Pentecost, where he had laid anchor in the bay and named after St Philip and St James and

called it the *Port of Vera Cruz* (The True Cross). His voyage across the Pacific from Callao, the Port of Lima in Peru, can almost be dated by the names given to these islands and features seen according to the liturgical celebration. The most prominent example of this pattern is how Easter Island received its name. The Pentecost diary entry of Chaplain Fray Martin de Munilla gives fascinating details about the celebration of Low Mass and High Mass, with great emphasis on the numbers receiving communion and the rituals giving a great ceremonial tone to the day's events. Two weeks later, for the Feast of Corpus Christi on May 25th 1606, Fray de Munilla gives similar detail about the preparation of the parade area for the procession with the Blessed Sacrament and how the Solemn High Mass was celebrated, complete with dances, one of boys and the other of men, including salvos of guns to venerate the Blessed Sacrament.

There is little doubt in the detail outlined in the Chaplain's diary that their intentions were of a very "High Church" style in the spirit of the Baroque era even celebrated at sea and in newly discovered territory.⁷

The Southland of today

Ten years ago I suggested "...we may perhaps take encouragement from the vision and goal of the rather quixotic figure of Quiros. His vision of Christianity brought to the islands of the Austral Lands took several more centuries to be achieved, but in God's good time it happened and it continues". I then quoted the actual words of the Franciscan chaplain on Quiros' voyage. These words may inspire us to give thanks for what the Spirit has led these lands so remote and unknown to achieve:

*It was a thing of wonder and awe and a most powerful incentive to all of us, and even for Christians not present but who may hear of it, to give boundless thanks to God because in our days, in lands so remote and unknown, His most Holy Name is glorified. And I hold this to be a most certain sign that in times to come in this new world His most Holy Name shall be known and glorified, and the natives converted to our holy faith.*⁸

With the perspective of today, we can still commit ourselves to look back in thanksgiving and go forward in faith.

Part 2: The contemporary perspective

Its challenge to recognise civic ritual alongside religious ritual

In recent decades there have been growing trends that highlight a developing awareness of the unique qualities of Australia's heritage. The major indication of this has been the political decision of setting a fixed date for Australia Day on January 26th and not leaving it to the nearest Monday. This was indeed a unique step in the land of long weekends.

Another level of national recognition has been the structured coinciding of the naming of the recipients of Australian awards for service to their country. This is gradually overcoming the announcement of Imperial awards associated with the Queen's birthday,

ironically not observed on the same day in all States. The Australians of the Year are now being named in various categories including: The Australian of the Year; The Australian Youth of the Year etc.

For all the growth at grass roots levels of participation, there still is a subtle questioning of: What is Australia Day? What is Australia Day commemorating? What decides which events trigger the commemoration? A similar confusion arose two decades ago when efforts were made to coordinate the 500th anniversary of the dubious discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492. A depth of feeling was provoked by the presumption that a European sailor "discovered" an island, a continent, a mountain range, when there were already people living in those environments for centuries. The outcome of this debate watered down Columbus' role to the celebration being classified as the 500th anniversary of the Americas, covering the North, Central, and South Americas.

Australia suffers from a similar quandary of how history is interpreted. There has been a changing face after generations of a mono-British perspective which has been opened up with projections of other nations and their exploratory expeditions. Today, there are mini industries about the Chinese expeditions to the South in 1432; the Portuguese voyage of Mendana in 1527; the Spanish Quiros expedition in 1605-6. Also in 1606 the Dutch ship *Duyfken* reached Australian shores. The European Enlightenment generated a fervour for exploration of the new world, and specifically, the Pacific Ocean, which was sought by French, German, British, and Russian interests.

Another change in the historical perspective has been the conflation of the elites of Europe as being the sources of all activity. Hence, the age of the Kings, Queens, Popes, Admirals, Governors, and sundry other levels of absolute control, has been trimmed considerably with the emergence of social history which focuses on the little people at the grass roots level; the ordinary people of the working classes; who can contribute and Jack can become as good as his master.

The Mass texts for Australia Day

The full Mass texts for Australia Day formally recognised by Rome with the *recognitio* provide us with a fascinating full suite of prayers making up the Proper of the Mass for Australia Day.⁹ Seeing how the Eucharistic Prayer is the centre of the Mass itself, it is no mere coincidence to begin our reflections on the Preface for this particular day. It is noteworthy for the biblical resonances and images that connect with our Australian experience that could almost transform all Christians into being committed proponents of the environmental and ecological concerns.

As with all Prefaces, the motive for giving thanks to the creator God is to acknowledge what he has prepared for us in his blessings upon our land. As always it is directed to the heavenly Father:

*Father,
all-powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to
give you thanks.*

Continuing the pattern of eucharistic theology, we connect the thanksgiving to the Father through, with, and in Christ in the power of his Spirit:

*...Out of your infinite glory
you have given us the power through
your Spirit
for our hidden self to grow strong,
so that Christ may live in our hearts
through faith...*

We are reminded that Christ lives in us through faith and we renew St Paul's image that our hidden self is to grow strong, as so powerfully expressed in Frank Andersen's song of this Pauline image.

Pope Benedict would encourage all residents of "The Great Southland" to "Seize the Spirit" and take that motto of the World Youth Day to be the reminder at every eucharistic celebration that the Holy Spirit comes amongst us to change us to live God's plan as well as to change our offerings in the bread and wine to become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The theme of thanksgiving underpins the next phrase:

*Through [Christ] you have blessed our
land.
The fierce flood of your grace sweeps
away all barriers,
and soaks deep into our being,
so that the desert blooms with the life
that lies in wait.*

We all know Australia is a land of drought and flooding rains. In that perverseness of nature we are left beyond our control in many situations of the cycles and rhythms of nature. In this ying-yang situation the psalmist's phrase *sicut in terra australi* (as in the south land) becomes the closest we have to a mention of Australia in the bible, and provides us with a reminder of our weather patterns that can bring about the miracle of wild flowers, which calls to mind the Israelites' experience of when the desert blooms.

Our text then takes us back to the Pauline image of the life we share in Christ that is to grow in us so that we share fully in Christ's promise:

*You will give us the strength
to grasp the breadth and the length
the height and the depth
of that utter fullness of your love
which surpasses all knowledge.*

The eschatological connection "With all the saints of heaven" leads us to the vision of the heavenly liturgy and reminds us that our hope is built on the strong Trinitarian perspective of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The epitome of eucharistic action in Thanksgiving, Anamnesis, and Epiclesis, links us through the *Holy, Holy, Holy*, and the Doxology: through [Christ], and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory and honour is yours almighty Father.

The Australian Eucharistic Prayers

It is not exactly fully accurate to specify Australian Eucharistic Prayers but we have a series of connections that help to shape the Eucharistic Prayer in a particular way on Australia Day.

Many people would be aware that in the original Roman Canon, which is often now called Eucharistic

Prayer I, there is the convention whereby, on certain occasions like RCIA rituals, Confirmations, or Baptisms, that specific occasions can be expressed in the special *Communicantes*. In Eucharistic Prayer I there are at least eight occasions when a specific formula is given for the specific feast or occasion that is introduced by saying "In union with the whole Church we celebrate that day...", which start off with the word *Communicantes* in Latin.

For Australia Day, Rome has approved the writing of special forms of *Communicantes* for each of the original four Eucharistic Prayers in the 1970 *Roman Missal*. Strangely, they are not written with specific themes or images connected with Australian motifs but simply add the connection of the gratitude we acknowledge for God's blessings on our country Australia.

Eucharistic Prayer I acknowledges:

*Father, accept this offering
from your whole family
and from those who celebrate with gratitude
your blessings on our country Australia.*

Eucharistic Prayer II is almost identical in saying:

*Lord, remember your Church
throughout the world,
and those who celebrate with gratitude
your blessings on our country Australia;*

Eucharistic Prayer III is again very similar:

*Father, hear the prayers of the family
who have gathered here before you,
who celebrate with gratitude
your blessings on our country Australia.*

Eucharistic Prayer IV completes the same idea:

*Remember those who take part in this offering,
those here present
who celebrate with gratitude
your blessings on our country Australia,...*

The close identity of these phrases may seem to be repetitive and not very conducive to particularising the special interests for Australia Day beyond the blessings' theme. Even so, it would still be a worthy dimension of careful planning to ensure that the *Roman Missal* have the requisite texts for Australia Day so that they can be used on that one day in January. As the advertisement for Good Year Tyres says "Even if it's once a year, it's a good year!"

Orations for Australia Day

In the full suite of Mass texts for any occasion the Presidential Prayers are particularised by the formal titles when they are proclaimed: Opening Prayer, Prayer over the Gifts, Prayer after Communion.

In the particular context of the Australia Day Mass these Presidential Prayers are not over-endowed with references to Australia or images and metaphors that resonate with us.

Opening Prayer

*Father ever generous,
enlighten us with new vision
to see your shaping hand at work
in all the gifts to our country
with which your providence frames our lives.*

The strength of this text is to imagine the image of the potter as being the foundational metaphor whereby we see "your shaping hand at work". This is

further amplified in the acknowledgement of "the gifts to our country with which your providence frames our lives". This would be better if the word "Australia" was inserted after "our country". The "with which" phrase is a tongue twister for public proclamation.

Prayer over the Gifts

*God of all power,
accept the gifts we offer with ourselves
to become the pure bread of Christ
and the new wine of the kingdom.*

This text also shows its strength in the ritual action of acknowledging the gifts of bread and wine but it has no direct connection with Australia Day. The best that can be said is that the metaphors of the pure bread of Christ and the new wine of the kingdom have biblical overtones but they do not express a strong theology of the divine presence and may be seen to draw attention to some of the alcohol connected problems of our culture.

Prayer after Communion

*All-provident God,
through the sacraments of your love
grant us always to live in this land
united in purpose and freed in the Spirit
until the final feast at heaven's table.*

This text emphasises the "All-provident God" who is well and truly the source of the blessing of the natural resources which sustain us in this country. On a more theological level, the theme of sacramentality offers us a profound way of seeing the sacraments of God's love. When sacramentality means the things of nature endowed with divine power, then we can entrust ourselves to be "united in purpose and freed in the Spirit".

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