

# ANZAC Day- April 25, 2023

## Acknowledgement

Wherever you are reading this, take a moment to be still and contemplate the place where you are. Connect your feet to the ground or floor and *feel* Country beneath you. We acknowledge and pay respect to the first Australian people as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this land. We thank them with a deep gratitude for their ongoing care of the lands, seas, skies, and waterways that we call home. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside First Nations people for reconciliation and justice.



Remembering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ANZACS, [Facebook Page 2023](#)

## Context

Although not officially a Christian celebration, as Catholics we recognise that there are many parallels that can be drawn between ANZAC day and the Easter Triduum. There is rich symbolism and ritual attached to both events. Both events provide fundamental principles for the foundation and identity of a community; both address themes of dying for others, new hope beyond death, transformation, and working for liberation and freedom.

The road to full liberation and freedom is ongoing for the First Nations People of Australia and at this time of potential Constitutional change I am reminded of the Apostle Paul and the time and effort he invested in establishing Christianity as a religion that spanned ethnic divisions. When preaching in Athens, Paul noted that God made every nation from “one blood.” (Acts 17:26) During this nation’s early wartime efforts “one blood” was not acknowledged or recognised and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were not eligible to enlist due to their skin colour and non-European background. Enlist however they did, and their contributions cannot be overlooked particularly when they occurred during a period of our post-colonial history where discrimination was widespread.

## Scripture (John 15:13)

***“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”***



Figure 1 Pietà, Mary and Jesus, Basilica of the Madonna del Sangue, Re, Piedmont, Italy, Europe. Photograph. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, Apr 25 2022. [quest.eb.com/images/151\\_4219182](https://quest.eb.com/images/151_4219182). Accessed 19 Apr 2023.

## Reflection by Nadine Grant – Consultant Formation Identity and Outreach

Every ANZAC day we remember the selfless example set by those in our defence forces who made the ultimate sacrifice to retain peace and freedom for our country. It has only been in recent years that the contributions of the First Peoples of Australia to those wartime efforts have begun to be recognised. Despite discrimination and exclusion, thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have served in the Australian Defence Forces since the 1860s and possibly earlier. More than 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples served in the First World War, and more than 4000 in the Second World War.

It's difficult for us to comprehend that First Nations peoples served Australia in support of the British Empire during both World Wars but at the time, were not recognised as the Traditional Owners of this land, not permitted to vote and not eligible for veterans' benefits. Many enlisted by lying about their ethnicity because life in the defence forces offered freedom of movement, education, money and equal rights with non-Indigenous servicemen and women that did not exist in other parts of Australian society. They were equals on the battlefield but when they returned, they were not given the respect or entitlements they deserved. Many found that they were rejected from hotels and public places or denied employment and the benefits offered to other returning service personnel. It was only 6 years ago that Indigenous veterans finally led the national Anzac Day march for the first time. This was a long overdue acknowledgement for the thousands of service people who returned home to discrimination and no support.



Group portrait of a platoon of Aboriginal soldiers who volunteered for service during the Second World War. The soldiers were mainly from Lake Tyers Station, known as Bung Yarnda by the local Gunai/Kurnai community in Eastern Victoria. Image courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.

Like the early Christians, who overcame many obstacles and persecution when working to spread the Good News to nearby nations, the First Peoples of Australia have travelled a road of uncertainty, oppression, and fear during the last 230 years. It is of critical importance for truth telling and reconciliation that we persist with raising awareness around the discrimination that has robbed First Nations people of identity and opportunity since the arrival of foreign settlers. Sharing the truth around the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service in our defence forces is one small way we can continue to advocate for reconciliation.

## Prayer

God of love and justice,

Today we remember all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who died or were wounded in defence of this country and its freedom.

Help us to honour these sacrifices through prayers and actions for peace in the world.

Send your Spirit to eliminate misunderstandings, hatred, and prejudice so that we may grow together as one family.

Guide our steps in the way of peace, truth and reconciliation

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

## Call to Action and References

- You can learn more about our First Nations people's contributions to the defence of our nation on the [ANZAC portal](#) or [AITSIS](#)
- use this [resource](#) to guide your own ANZAC Day Liturgy of the Word.
- explore this [webpage](#) and choose some of the activities to complete as a family.
- attend an ANZAC Day event. Times and locations around Cairns can be found [here](#).

