

A Day for Reflection

By Maureen Gaul Leader – Formation Identity and Outreach Team

Acknowledgement of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

I acknowledge the First Nations peoples who have enduring connection to the land, seas, skies, and waterways of this nation Australia, whose Elders have modelled right relationship to Country so that all of creation may flourish. I recognise that sovereignty has not been ceded, and seek to journey alongside in friendship towards justice, healing and flourishing for all.

Context of Prayer

In 1939, William Cooper, a First Nations Christian Leader called for the Australian Church to 'have heart' and work to bring about justice that is life-giving to the First Peoples. He advocated for 'Aboriginal Sunday' - the Sunday prior to 26th January – to be a day of prayer, reflection, and solidarity, and to acknowledge the impact of colonisation. This year in the Church's liturgical calendar, Aboriginal Sunday fell on 21st January 2024, the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time.



Common Grace (2024) Promotional material for Aboriginal Sunday. Used with permission.

Before entering into Scripture from this day, I reflect on the wisdom writings of Pope Francis, who spoke of building a 'culture of encounter' *"in a simple way, as Jesus did: not just seeing, but looking; not just hearing, but listening; not just passing people by, but stopping with them."* I acknowledge a personal need to grow in God's wisdom and pray to listen and learn new ways.

Scripture - Responsorial Psalm

Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour.

Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Remember your mercy, Lord,
and the love you have shown from of old.
In your love remember me,
because of your goodness O Lord.

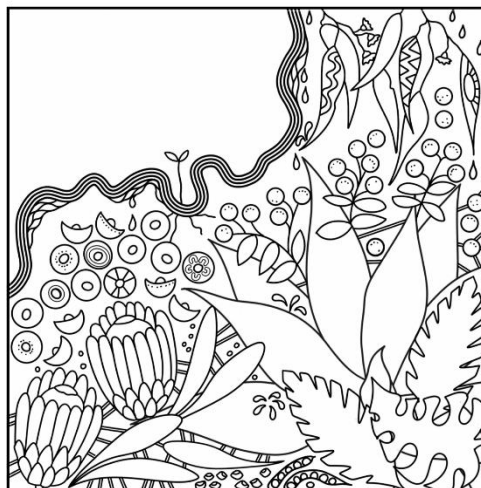
Teach me your ways, O Lord.

The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who stray,
He guides the humble in the right path,
He teaches his way to the poor.

Teach me your ways, O Lord.

[Psalm 24:4-9](#)

Aboriginal Sunday 2024



HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL BE LIKE A
GARDEN IN EARLY SPRING, WITH PLANTS
SPRINGING UP EVERYWHERE.

Isaiah 61:11 NLT

COMMON
GRACE

Common Grace (2024) Colouring in "Seeds of Faith for Aboriginal Justice" by Safina Stewart.

Reflection

When Pope John Paul II made his pilgrimage in Australia in 1986, he acknowledged the genius and gifts of the First Nations Peoples, and urged them to “remain forever people of your culture” as a “way of touching the mystery of God’s Spirit in you and in creation”. He spoke of the “spiritual closeness” to Country and careful stewardship of the Earth’s resources, as well as deep respect for human life shown through kinship systems and lore.

In his address, Pope John Paul II referenced the Catholic Church’s great respect for the First People’s culture, saying “You are part of Australia and Australia is part of you. And the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”

As a Catholic Christian, I live in hope for renewal following the failed Voice referendum towards reconciliation and solidarity with the First Nations people of Australia. There are learnings for me from ancient texts such as the Bible and the writings of Church leaders, and from new texts, like the [Uluru Statement From the Heart](#) and words of wisdom from First Nations Elders and Leaders. William Cooper’s original call for justice to bring about the flourishing of First Peoples can be realised through deep listening and truth-telling. I pray that all Australians can journey together for peace, justice, and healing. Perhaps the 26th of January is the right day to reflect on the listening and learning needed in our lives for a profound way forward for human flourishing.

Benediction “Hands & Hearts”

Written by Adam Gowen, Wiradjuri man.

Great ancient spirit, our source

One who has heard cries for justice from eternity past

Instill us with strength to pursue the world you imagine.

May our hands find tasks that bring hope to those around us.

May our hearts find joy in joining with those who seek your kingdom order.

Ngawa (yes, amen).

Call to Action

- Engage with the Common Grace’s creative activity “[Seeds of Faith](#)”;
- View Common Grace’s [Acknowledgement of Country video of Safina Stewart and Bianca Manning](#);
- View [Aboriginal Sunday 2024 - conversation](#);
- View [“In our Waiting” prayer by Auntie Sue Hodges](#);
- View [Aboriginal Sunday 2024 Next Steps](#) to continue the journey with Common Grace;
- Read about [truth-telling](#) with Reconciliation Australia.



Inspiration for Reflection...

- Common Grace’s [Aboriginal Sunday church Resource Toolkit](#);
- Pope Francis’ wisdom [For a culture of encounter](#).
- [Pope John Paul II’s address](#) from his pilgrimage in Australia.

