

Acknowledgement of Country

Care of country is a foundational principle in the cultural and spiritual practices of Australia's First Peoples. It reflects a profound and reciprocal relationship with the land, seas, skies, waterways- one based on respect, stewardship, and deep connectedness.

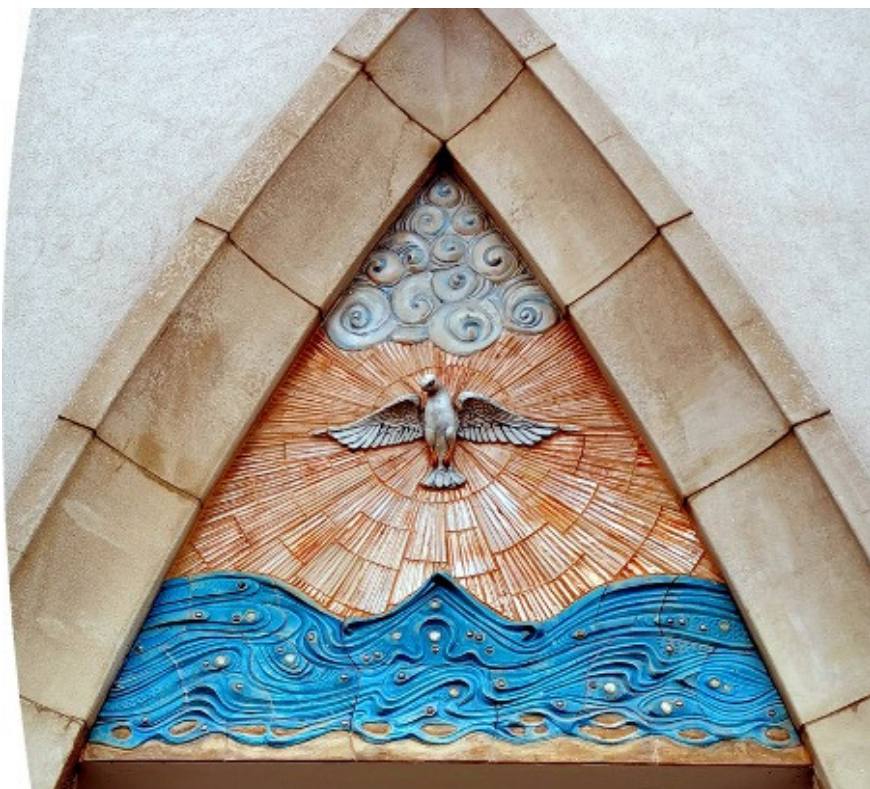
This relationship goes beyond physical care; it encompasses cultural, spiritual, and ecological dimensions that have been maintained over tens of thousands of years.

As we gather to pray on the Country of the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji people we commit to continued dialogue and the sharing of wisdom with the elders of this place.

May they guide us to know and adopt more sustainable practices in care of land, seas, skies and waterways and to understand the sacredness of all creation.

Context - The Spirit Moves Us

In this third week of Advent, we light the pink candle, the candle of joy, on our Advent wreath. In Sunday's Gospel readings John the Baptist informs his listeners that the one who is to come will baptise not with water but with fire- literally a frightening prospect! Not entirely 'joyful' sounding however Jesus will reveal that the fire is the fire of love. Jesus presents us with an alternative story, a new day, a new way of being and living- a reason to be joyful.



Scripture

Luke (3:15-16)

As the people were filled with expectation and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,

John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Image 1: Kun, Eva. *Coming of the Holy Spirit*, from *Art in the Christian Tradition*, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <https://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=58640> [retrieved November 20, 2024]. Original source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Verese gyhaza Szentlelek Foto Taler Tamas8.jpg>.



Reflection

by Nadine Grant – Consultant Formation Identity and Outreach

Catholics believe that the Holy Spirit, sent to the church by Jesus, continues to teach us and open our hearts and minds to understand more deeply what Jesus proclaimed and what God continues to call us to do.

Through the Spirit there is an ongoing deepening and understanding of the mysteries of our faith. An example of this deepening of faith is presented in the various Vatican writings throughout modern history released by different Popes, addressing different issues throughout the ages.

Our prayers over the past weeks have called on us to contemplate the Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si* in the lead up to Christmas. In the light of the week of joy this Advent, let us consider what can we do to bring joy not only to our friends and family but to the wider community and to our world?

The Holy Spirit is stirring the Church again through our response to *Laudato Si*, inspiring new and transformative ways to care for our common home and bring joy to all of the world's people as they are enabled to live life to the full. As the encyclical states, the earth, our "common home", is like our sister and our mother. But we are damaging this familial relationship as we harm the environment.

In so doing, we are damaging our relationship with other humans, particularly those least equipped to defend themselves: the poor and future generations. We are forgetting our interconnectedness with the earth and with those around and ahead of us who depend on our good stewardship of the gift of creation.



Image 2: Herd of elephant resting. Photography. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016. quest.eb.com/images/139_1935826. Accessed 2 Dec 2024.

Prayer

Lord of life, may we learn from our past irresponsibility, be filled with a spirit of concern for our environment and be gifted with the courage needed to change.

Let us pray to the Lord,

All: Lord of life, hear our prayer

Lord of life, in the joy of our celebrations this season, may we find time to contemplate your gifts to us, appreciate your infinite goodness and sit in wonder and awe of the beauty of creation.

Let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord of life, hear our prayer

Lord of life, open our hearts to the gifts of your Spirit that we may have the wisdom to find creative ways to protect and renew all of creation for the benefit of the Earth, and its people, today and forever.

Let us pray to the Lord

All: Lord of life, hear our prayer

Call to Action

- Clean up your local beach or favourite walking path/track.
- Limit the hours of running your Christmas lights-energy reduction means reduced fossil fuel emissions.
- Think before you shop for food and gifts- prioritise gifts that do not exploit people.
- Consider the food miles your produce travels- can you buy local?
- Opt for more vegetarian dishes- animal digestive systems produce methane, a gas which affects the earth's temperature and climate system.
- Instead of going to the Boxing Day sales, plan an alternative- a trip to the park or a walk in a National Park if you are able.

