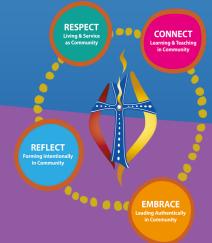


Family Prayer - Days of Mourning



by Maureen Gaul | Identity and Outreach

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, and whose Elders have modelled right relationship to Country. Walking softly on this land, I seek to take my place in bringing about healing and flourishing in a spirit of love and truth.

Context

Australia is on a journey as a nation. And we are mourning the violence of the past. The landing of the British colonists on 26 January is, to many Australians, a commemoration of deep loss. Loss too in the aftermath of the Bondi terror attack on 14 December 2025. From a Catholic worldview, it is prudent to ask how these harms to humanity shape courageous engagement in dialogue towards healing, truth and restoration of relationships.

In the Hebrew Bible, we hear of a people who 'walked in darkness' in times of loss and distress. Many Australians, facing uncertainty, despair and longing may feel they too are caught in a darkness.

In the midst of increasing fragmentation of society, polarisation of discourse and distrust in institutions, people have - and continue to be - denied their right to live in peace, with justice and in dignity. I believe this is not the vision for our nation that we seek to share to the next generation. How can we shift from the shadows into a more enlightened way of being community to one another?



*The Prophet Isaiah. Fine Art. Encyclopædia Britannica ImageQuest,
Accessed January 30, 2026. https://quest.eb.com/images/525_2905544.*

Scripture: Isaiah 9:2

On 25 January, the 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time in the Catholic Liturgical cycle, worldwide, listeners heard of the light of Christ that Christians believe Jesus brought to the world.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

*The people that walked in darkness
has seen a great light;
on those who live in a land of deep shadow
a light has shone.*

Reflection

This verse from Isaiah speaks to the foundation of Christianity, with believers “who know God lives in their midst and who seek constantly to draw others into the freedom and light” of Jesus’ love (Byrne). Taking our place in bringing healing and flourishing is a central calling of the Catholic faith. It shifts us out from the shadows.

Light can win. And in these fragile times where there is much commemoration, mourning and unresolved hurt, I would encourage each of us to show our collective spirit of love and truth.

By rejecting the division caused by untruths, distrust and misinformation, together, we reaffirm the radical value of human life and celebrate the rich diversity of our existence, bonded by our shared humanity.

Prayer

While considering how to stand in solidarity with the vulnerable, the harassed, and the forgotten, you may appreciate this prayer by Joshua Lane:

“Grant us strength to speak truth where it can be heard,
and courage to stand for justice wherever it is needed.

We receive the peace Christ offers
a peace that welcomes the stranger,
cares for Country, and releases forgiveness.

Let it be done.”

Call to Action

- From the lands of the Waka Waka, Gadigal, Bidjigal, Dharawal and Garigal Peoples, Brooke Prentis and Helen Wright invite us to “step into a new day”, drawing on the wisdom for the past to form new ways of learning to journey together.
- Listen to Brooke and Helen Speak to Country and share their story and dreams through their poem and song, [“A New Day”](#).

Inspiration for Reflection...

‘The History of January 26’ from [Common Grace](#).

[“A New Day”](#) by Brooke Prentis and Helen Wright.

“National Day of Mourning to Honour Bondi Victims” by Mark Gaetani on [CathNews](#).

Scripture Commentary 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A by B. Byrne SJ, from [Liturgy Help](#).

‘Prayer for Peace’ (excerpt) by Joshua Lane on [Common Grace](#).