



"At the heart of the upcoming Voice to Parliament Referendum is the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the world's oldest continuing culture, in the Australian Constitution. As Catholics, we have a responsibility to listen to the voices of First Australians and to work towards a more just and equitable society.

The Voice to Parliament Referendum provides all Catholics with a unique opportunity to come together as a community and draw upon our faith and moral grounding to make an informed decision."

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching

- preferential option for the poor
- dignity of the human person
- care for our common home
- subsidiarity and participation
- the common good
- solidarity

Pope Francis describes *the common good* as something "belonging to all and meant for all". To understand how best to work towards this kind of world, we need to accept that we have a collective responsibility to meet the needs of others. We can only do this when we listen to the voices of the people who are experiencing such needs. This is an act of solidarity.

"*Solidarity* reminds us that we are much stronger and better when we are together, therefore solidarity requires a kind of deep listening. In our Aboriginal way we listen from our earliest days, we could not live good and useful lives unless we listen. It's the normal way for us to learn."

- Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann

Human dignity is a God-given "quality of being human, Independent of ethnicity, creed, gender, sexuality, age or ability". From a CST perspective, the principle affirms the Christian "belief that every person is intrinsically valuable and worthy of respect..."

The road of reconciliation we have to walk is long. But in returning to the best of our spiritual traditions and, for Christians, to the new commandment Jesus gave to "love one another" (Jn13:34), we discover again or for the first time that love leads us to justice and hope – to a new life."

- Dr Rebekah Pryor, Caritas Australia

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"
John 18:37-38

What is truth?

"Let it not be said that the fair and equitable recognition of Aboriginal rights to land is discrimination. To call for the acknowledgment of the land rights of people who have never surrendered those rights is not discrimination. Certainly, what has been done cannot be undone. But what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow... "

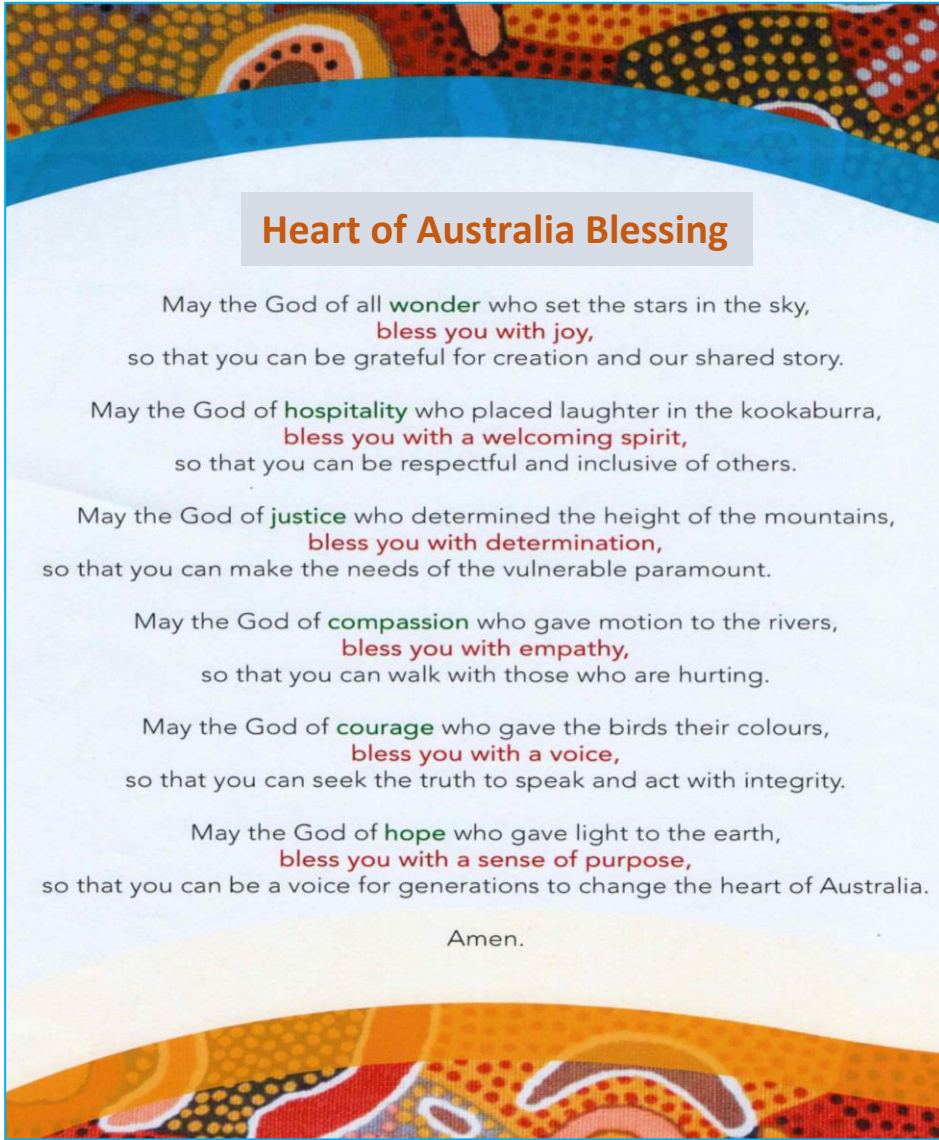
- Pope John Paul 11, The Alice Springs Statement 1986(!)

What is recognition?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have asked for recognition to be in the form of a Voice to Parliament.

"...we are challenged to listen and respond to the cry of all life pleading, 'Am I not your neighbour?'"





Heart of Australia Blessing

May the God of all **wonder** who set the stars in the sky,
bless you with joy,
 so that you can be grateful for creation and our shared story.

May the God of **hospitality** who placed laughter in the kookaburra,
bless you with a welcoming spirit,
 so that you can be respectful and inclusive of others.

May the God of **justice** who determined the height of the mountains,
bless you with determination,
 so that you can make the needs of the vulnerable paramount.

May the God of **compassion** who gave motion to the rivers,
bless you with empathy,
 so that you can walk with those who are hurting.

May the God of **courage** who gave the birds their colours,
bless you with a voice,
 so that you can seek the truth to speak and act with integrity.

May the God of **hope** who gave light to the earth,
bless you with a sense of purpose,
 so that you can be a voice for generations to change the heart of Australia.

Amen.

“Australians can be proud that our First Peoples have presented a request to be heard through a Constitutional Voice.

A more civilised and gracious response to a history littered with violence is hard to imagine.

What a remarkable opportunity Australians have been given to forge greater unity in our nation.

Have we the courage to face our First Nations peoples and assure them that they are loved?”

– Bishop Vincent Long,
 Easter Reflection, 2023.

Voice Prayer



We pray for a bright and just shared future for all who call Australia home.

We ask that Your grace of acceptance and compassion will guide us.

Let the Creator Spirit lead our journey with the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of this land.

May we share Your Spirit more deeply; celebrate the gifts You have given us.

Help us appreciate true harmony and peace just as our Old People did;

Keep us strong, make us resilient and remember us in this time.

Now is an opportunity to change our Nation’s history for the better.

Walk with us as we write a new chapter together and

may we be one in Your love.

Content for the most part, comes from NATSICC’s Resource: ‘One Journey Together’. It is a large Resource and can be accessed through the Brigidine website: <https://brigidine.org.au/naidoc-week-in-australia/> We’re invited to use these ‘snippets’- for a ‘cuppa & read,’ some quiet consideration, a conversation with another, a table conversation, prayer...

This book: *The Voice to Parliament* by Thomas Mayo and Kerry O’Brien is available at Big W \$12.

