

## FROM FR. WILLIAM IN AUSTRALIA

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Greetings from Australia! And greetings too, from Fr. Jesse and the congregation of All Saints, Kempsey, New South Wales, who have given me such a warm welcome here. I'm now in the preaching rota on the first and third Sundays of the month, and will be regularly celebrating at the weekday Wednesday Mass, as well as taking part in a number of Parish activities.

I wanted particularly to share with you all the extraordinary day I had yesterday. With Fr. Jesse and several of our congregation, I travelled the two and a half hour journey to Christ Church Cathedral Grafton for the installation of Revd. Aunty Lenore Parker, the first woman First-People priest to be admitted as an honorary Canon of the Cathedral. Aunty Lenore – 'Aunty' and 'Uncle' are the titles for First People Elders – is a much-loved Elder of the Yaegle people of the Northern Rivers in New South Wales. She is a lifetime member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council, and is seen as having made a significant contribution to the Anglican Church of Australia. Her appointment as Canon yesterday recognised her service, wisdom and spiritual leadership.

The service began at the West door with a 'Welcome to Country' from local First People leaders, and we then entered the Cathedral to the sound of the Clapsticks. I found the service that followed very moving. One of its main themes was 'Reconciliation' which is a main theme in Grafton Diocese, and indeed Australia-wide in the Anglican Church. What made this real for me was that punches were not being pulled, and I detected an awareness that the concept of 'reconciliation' itself, between two parties – White Australia and First Peoples – so unequal in power, was in itself problematic. But the attempt was visibly being made; the process determinedly entered into.

I took the Order of Service home with me and want to share with you the elements of it that I felt particularly resonated with both that difficulty and that determination. They are below. The prayer 'God of Holy Dreaming' and indeed the order of the Eucharist in which it is contained, is of Aunty Lenore's own composition, and has an honoured place in the Anglican Prayer Book of Australia.

### ***The Gathering***

*We come to gather and celebrate*

*We come to mourn the slowness of inclusion.*

*We come to admit to our complicity*

*We come to be united to each other after a long journey*

Do we come now to reclaim our place within the ancient story of goodness? Yes?  
**Yes.**

### **The Confession**

*O Christ, in whose body was named all the violence of the world, and in whose memory is contained our profoundest grief, we lay open to you; the violence done to us in time before and within our memory; the wounds that have misshaped our lives; the injuries we cannot forget and have not forgiven. The remembrance of them is painful to us;*

***the burden of them is intolerable.***

*We lay open to you: the violence done in our name in time before and within our memory; the wounds we have inflicted; the stolen families; the listening we failed to do; the injuries we cannot forget, and for which we have not been forgiven. The remembrance of them is grievous to us;*

***the burden of them is intolerable.***

*We lay open to you: those who have pursued a violent knowledge the world cannot forget; those caught up in violence they have refused to name; those who have enacted violence which they have not repented. The remembrance of them is grievous to us;*

***the burden of them is intolerable.***

*We lay open to you: the victims of violence whose only memorial is anger; those whose suffering was sustained on our behalf; those whose continued oppression provides the ground we stand on. The remembrance of them is grievous to us;*

***the burden of them is intolerable***

### **The Collect**

*Eternal God, you blessed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with wisdom to live in this land and care for it; bless Australia's First Peoples again today with pride in their languages, stories and songs; and give grace to all of us to share culture, faith and hope together through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen***

### **The Eucharist – concelebrated by Bishop Murray and Revd. Aunty Lenore**

*God of Holy Dreaming, Great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth. You spoke and the gum tree grew. In the vast desert and dense forest, and in cities at the water's edge, creation sings your praise. Your presence endures as the rock at the heart of our land. When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones; the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed. The sunrise of your*

*Son coloured the earth anew and bathed it in glorious hope. In Jesus we have been reconciled to you, to each other, and to your whole creation. Therefore...*

Below are photos of Aunty Lenore herself, and of the Kempsey mob on the steps of the Cathedral. Please keep me in your prayers, as I keep you in mine.

Yours,

Fr. William

