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## Australia Day - 26 January 2022

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# 26 January 2022

## Australia Day

Reflection by Angela McCarthy

### Introduction

Australia Day continues to be a fraught time for many Australians, particularly our Indigenous sisters and brothers. The readings help us to view these difficulties with a much deeper perspective than a solely political stance or viewed through notions of power.

### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you showed us how to be poor in spirit.

Lord, have mercy.

You show us how to welcome God into our lives.

Christ, have mercy.

You bring peace to all who are tormented.

Lord, have mercy.

### Collect

*Grant we pray, O Lord our God,  
that as the cross shines in our southern skies,  
so may Christ bring light to our nation,  
to its people old and new  
and by saving grace, transform our lives.*

### First Reading

**Isaiah 32:15-18**

In this chapter of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of the when the cosmic covenant is restored and the whole of creation is transformed by justice and righteousness.

### Responsorial Psalm

**Psalm 84(85)**

*The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

The response to the psalm holds together the first reading and the gospel. What attitudes can we choose that bring peace into our own part of the world? The prophet Isaiah imagines the possibilities when the Spirit restores the whole of creation and Jesus imagines a society that will be based on love and justice if everyone follows his guiding words in the 'beatitudes'.

## **Second Reading**

### **1 Corinthians 12:4-11 or Romans 12:9-13**

The Corinthians pericope is perhaps very well known to many of us. There are many gifts but only the one Spirit from whom they all come. In Australia today we need to pray that all the gifts of those who have been here for over 60,000 years and those who have been here for only just over 200 years can recognise each other's gifts and be grateful.

The reading from Romans gives very good advice to us all. Do not let love be a pretence, make it real. Respect, hard work, hope and hospitality are the key ingredients.

## **Gospel Reading**

### **Matthew 5:1-12a or Luke 12:22-32**

Matthew's gospel centres around the choices in life that make our experience one of love and happiness. Luke's gospel encourages us to understand that God cares for us in every possible way. We must set our hearts on the kingdom and then everything else will fall into place.

## **Reflection**

The celebration of Australia Day on 26 January continues to bring disharmony and to many people it is a confronting 'celebration' of invasion and dispossession. The readings for today's liturgy offer us ways in which to live in this world that will replace the loss with hope. The Collect refers to the cross that shines in our southern skies. This has been a marker for the First Nations people for over 60,000 years and was also a marker for the first settlers who came to Australia by ship. As Christians, it reminds us that our salvation comes through the cross and resurrection of Christ and he is indeed the light that shines on us all. In the light of salvation there is no difference between us, we are all loved by God. The Collect concludes that to Australia's 'people old and new' this saving grace can transform our lives.

In the controversial third verse of our national anthem, Christ is recognised as our 'head and cornerstone'. His way and truth will guide our path and our lives of sacrifice and love will reflect our 'Master's care'. It is appropriate on this day to use all three verses, perhaps as a recessional song. We can pray that it becomes a

reality and that our nation will welcome many from 'across the seas' as we have 'boundless plains to share'.

Transformation only comes when the desire and the openness to change allows it to happen. God works within us when we allow divine love to be shown in our lives. In the first reading from Isaiah, the prophet imagines what it will be like when 'justice will come to live and integrity in the fertile land; integrity will bring peace, justice give lasting security'. Isaiah's audience had suffered the consequences of invasion after the rulers of Jerusalem had broken the covenant with God. But when the Spirit is poured out all of creation will be transformed. Today we can pray that such peace and justice will come for all people who live in Australia and for those who seek safety with us as refugees and asylum seekers.

The psalm also speaks of peace for the people when mercy and faithfulness have met, when 'justice shall march before him, and peace shall follow his steps'. This is achievable if we are open to transformation. Imagine if our conversations revolved around justice for all, respect and hospitality for all! Paul tells the Corinthians that the variety of gifts all come from the same Spirit and therefore respect is required for them all. The Corinthians were a very diverse people with people from many ethnicities as it was a busy port in the ancient world and suffered from conflicts of interest as we do. Imagine if our respect for the gifts of all First Nations people and those who seek shelter in our vast land as well as those who have been born here was true and evident in our politics, our workplaces, places of learning, our homes and places of rest and recreation. Paul's letter to the Romans, an alternate reading, also talks of respect and authentic love; let love 'not be a pretence' and that hospitality should be our 'special care'. Imagine if there were no doors shut in people's faces and efforts made to ensure that we work with a hope that makes us all cheerful.

The two gospels offered for today's liturgy show us Jesus' teaching about bringing to life the kingdom of heaven. The Jewish wisdom in the sayings that we refer to as 'beatitudes' in Matthew 5 begin and end with 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' and focus on the spiritual attitudes that we need to live our Christian lives as witnesses. Luke's account centres on Jesus teaching his disciples not to be worried about the little things because 'it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom'. Do not worry about what you wear, eat or drive, God will give us all that we need. It is very clear how we are to live so that the kingdom can be here on earth, here and now in Australia, not in some imagined time in the future. Salvation is real, it is for all of us, and we will experience what that means if we are willing to be transformed.

The prayer over the offerings asks that the fruits of the earth, tended by our hands, will bring 'a blessing on our land and peace to all who dwell here'. Let us offer ourselves in this celebration of the Eucharist as a community who will work towards peace in Australia for all people.

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

The readings today have all offered us ways to bring peace into our world. Let us pray for peace in this Australian context.

## Petitions

We pray for the Church in Australia that the work of the Plenary Council will continue strongly and come to fruition at the second assembly in July this year.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the world and political leaders of every nation, that they can be conscious of and care for the underprivileged and the stranger, especially those present in our own communities.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray especially for the leaders of Australia that they be effective and just leaders for all Australians within this ever-changing society. May they always act with integrity.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those seeking refuge because of political crisis and war. May they be treated with justice and hospitality and so be made welcome in their search for a new life and homeland.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the First Nations people of Australia. May they be comforted by the love and efforts for peace from within the wider Australian community.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the members of our Parish who are away or travelling during this time, may they have a peaceful rest with family and friends and be brought safely back to us.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

We offer these petitions with the hope and confidence that they will be heard and granted according to God's will, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva**

### **GA**

Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come. R. Maurus, et al./ Thomas Tallis. 376  
For the healing of the nations. F. Kaan. 513  
God of peace. A. Kelly CSsR/ C. Willcock SJ. 553  
Lord of earth and all creation. M. R. Thwaites/ H. M. Thwaites. 554  
The Beatitudes. P. Kearney. 489

### **AOV2**

God of peace. A. Kelly CSsR/ C. Willcock SJ. 138

### **AOVNG**

Gift of grace. Gina Ogilvie. 49

### **CWB**

Christ, our Lord, the Prince of ages. Anon. 644  
Help of Christians, guard this land. Richard Connolly. 711

### **CWBII**

Christ, our Lord, the Prince of ages. Anon. 399  
Help of Christians, guard this land. James Phillip McAuley. 429  
For Australia. Michael Raynor Thwaites and Honor Thwaites. 545  
God of peace. Anthony Kelly CSsR. 546  
A blessing hymn for Australia. Michael Herry FMS. 655

### **S&S1**

Lord, let us see your kindness. Paul Hillebrand. 71

### **S&S2**

Lord, show us your mercy and love. Janèt Sullivan Walker. 265

## **Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy**

Psalm 84: *The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*  
Psalm 84: Brian Fitzgerald. CWB 483

## **Music selections by Michael Mangan**

Hearts on fire (SHOF/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]  
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]