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Australia Day - 26 January 2023

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26 January 2023

Australia Day

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Australia Day is a festival with an uncertain cultural texture and a sly ambivalence. It is not ANZAC Day with its solemn play on remembrance and forgetting. Nor is it Labour Day when the theme is just work and just wages, with a celebration of work. Nor is it quite a true national day, with its geographical and historical focus on Sydney Harbour slightly off kilter in other cities and towns. Nor is it a unifying festivity, with its sanctification of colonial dominance and indigenous dispossession driving wedges through the community.

The day does try hard to implant itself into our national imagination and has struck some resonant chords. It is a holiday in summer before the kids go back to school and the work life resumes: that is not a bad thing. It involves family, barbecues, swimming, cricket, a long evening: these fit the bill. It is a day when many took up their Australian citizenship in town halls with elected government members and mayors across the country: it is Australia-as-multicultural and welcoming and local. It is us being not too good at being us yet being ourselves, nevertheless.

This good natured ambivalence should not be underestimated. It is good natured because we want to be good natured: it is an expression of our aspiration. It is ambivalent because the aspiration of Australia is not yet formed, not yet settled. The colonial narrative of a prison island transformed by squatters and soldiers and gold miners has just enough truth to make us wonder why it has worked. The historical narrative of indigenous dispossession, repression and 'stolen' is less able to be hidden as each day passes. And to collude in hiding it is certainly a sin as well as a national shame.

Our festival is a reminder that the 'founding myths', those central touchstones of identity, are not yet settled or sturdy. A small fleet of slightly sea-worthy 18th century ships sailed the vast oceans with an unedifying crew of sailors and a dismissive cargo of convicts. It was a remarkable feat, set in motion by a chillingly cruel and contemptuous home government. The ramifications of their success began the path to the ongoing dispossession and denigration of a culture 60,000 years in the making. In the middle of this history came more groups of second peoples fleeing hunger, famine, war. They came by any means, different types of 'boat' people, breaking cultural and racial stereotypes. These have been joined by migrating families seeking a better life and economic success. All are being slowly made and remade on a remarkable and ancient mass of land.

From this melange has emerged international talents, sportswomen and men, scientists, soldiers, leaders, gay icons, artists, missionaries, musicians, food producers, inventors: a remarkable pool of achievers and creators. Our success is part of our ambivalence. While it is not at all settled who we are, this mixture is 'us' and we strive to own all of it, the bad and the good and the ordinary and the unfinished.

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 those in darkness. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Isaiah 32:15-18

The effect of justice will be peace.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 84:9-14

The Lord speaks of peace to his people

Following the Isaiah reading, the Lord's voice is heard proclaiming our need of justice for the desired result of peace.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 OR Romans 12:9-13

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians the variety of gifts given by the Spirit is the work of God among us. From the letter to the Romans, there are very sound instructions on how to love each other and to work together.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:1-12 OR Luke 12:22-32

From Matthew 5 the Beatitudes, part of the Sermon on the Mount, point in the direction of how to live a Christian life.

Luke's gospel selection calls on us not to worry but to hand everything over to the Father and trust that we will be cared for in the fullest possible way.

Reflection

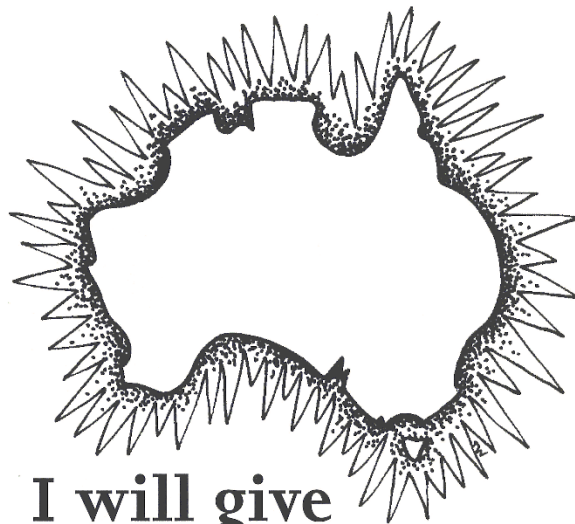
While preaching on Australia Day may run against the spirit of the occasion, our readings give us pause for reflection. The lection from the prophet Isaiah has as its premise that there is divine justice and divine righteous dwelling throughout the country. The text has a very domestic feel. It implores a peace marked by quietness and confidence; secure homes undisturbed by ructions. The homeliness of the imagery serves to remind us of the way domestic violence is at work in our society rendering homes unsafe. This is brought to our attention through the Australian

Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2022, which focused on the sources of domestic and family violence.

There are two Pauline readings provided as options. The excerpt from 1 Corinthians recognises the gifts distributed across the community by the Spirit. The emphasis falls on the utilisation of these gifts for the work of the Spirit, marked by the common good of all and the unity of all things in Christ. The Australian community is replete with gifts, and the reading directs them towards the upbuilding of the peoples and their service in Christ.

The second option is from the Letter to the Romans. It opens with a characteristic Pauline praise and admonition to love, but it is the closing lines that have strong resonance within Australian understandings. Paul directs the members to share with the poor in their midst, and to practice hospitality. Perhaps this year we can insure that sharing with the needy and offering hospitality are not declared to be on the endangered list.

A pair of Gospel passages are also provided, with a choice between Matthew and Luke. The Matthean reading is the Sermon on the Mount, allowing the festival of Australia to be brought into the blessings of the Beatitudes. It provides an opportune moment to invite those present to name the blessings that determine the conduct of their lives. Our Lukan text is a set of sayings which have a parallel in the saying 'no worries'! Jesus invites his followers to forsake worry. As for clothes and food, they are not the only things that are important, rather what matters is where our hearts are set. We can be a 'no worries' people, but only when we set our hearts on God's reign.



**I will give
you as a light to
the nations.** Isa 49:6

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As the psalmist declares, the Lord speaks of peace. With peace in our hearts let us offer the needs of this community and of the world.

Petitions

We pray for the Church in Australia that she can effectively carry out her mission to be a sign of God's unfailing and everlasting mercy through becoming more Christ-centred and missionary.

(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 for the leaders of Australia that they be effective and just leaders within this ever-changing society. May they always act with integrity for all races and cultures as we strive to live together in peace.

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

We pray for all those seeking refuge in Australia 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 those who are suffering, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, that they can experience the resurrection of your Son in their lives through the love and support of others.

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

We pray for all of us gathered around this altar and for all Australians, that we acknowledge the providence of God in our life and in the lives of all who call this land home.

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

Conclusion

In faith we bring these petitions that the needs of our community will be heard and answered. We ask this through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV2	AOVNG	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S2
A blessing hymn for Australia					655	
Advance Australia Fair					656	
Christ, our Lord, the Prince of Ages				644	399	
Come, Holy Ghost, Creator ,come			376	654	382	
For Australia					545	
Gift of grace		49				
God of peace	138		553		546	
Help of Christians, guard this land				711	429	
Lord of earth and all creation			554		545	
Lord, show us your mercy and love						265
Make me a channel of your peace	126		490	793	555	
The Beatitudes (Kearney)			489	817	456	
The Beatitudes (Russian Orthodox Chant)					563	
Veni, Creator Spiritus			373	851	390	

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 84: *The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

	CWB	JOBF
Psalm 84	483	pg. 32

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Hearts on fire (SHOF) [Gathering, Recessional]