

# **Peace in our Land**

**A parish kit for promoting peace  
in our families and our nation**

**Australia Day**

**About this kit**

This kit is offered as a pastoral tool for Australia Day 2003 (3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time).

**Contents**

- 1. Leaflet: 'Peace in Our Land' - (photocopy it as often as you like)
- 2. Notes for the liturgy.
- 3. Bulletin clip material.
- 4. Leaflet: 'Peace, Justice and Forgiveness' (Sample copy only).

To purchase further copies, contact The Story Source Tel/Fax (02) 9314 0867 [storysource@ozemail.com.au](mailto:storysource@ozemail.com.au)

**Background to this kit**

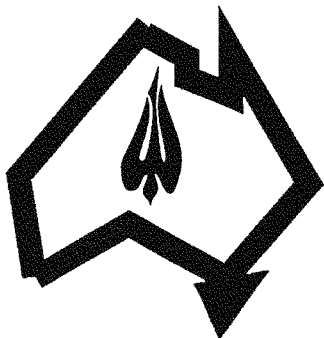
- There is unprecedented tension in our nation.
- Australia Day coincides with the World Meeting of Families in Manila.

**Broad aims of this kit**

- Encourage a spirit of forgiveness and compassion in society.
- Affirm the family as the training ground in reconciliation.

**Specific aims**

- Reflect on the direction of our nation.
- Promote the concept that 'As the family goes, so goes the rest of society'.



**Thank you  
for celebrating  
the gift of families  
and the gift of our nation**

# A letter to parish personnel

Dear Friends,

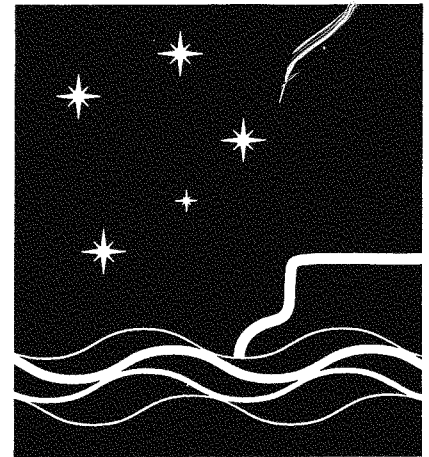
It seems that this year Australia Day will be celebrated at a time of exceptional tension.

There is deep division over our response to asylum seekers, and on top of the horror of the Bali bombing there are threats of further terrorism and the possibility of a war against Iraq. Then there are other challenges, no less urgent: reconciliation with Aborigines, the widening gap between rich and poor and the plight of those living in rural areas.

Our faith tradition helps us to see the way forward for our nation: Christ's message of love lived in the ordinary events of daily life. Central to those events is the formation received in family life.

The family is where we first learn to say 'sorry'. It is the continuing training ground for reconciliation. The level of forgiveness in our families will be reflected in how forgiving we are as a nation.

For the sake of Australia's future, let's encourage families to develop a lifestyle of forgiveness.



There is another reason for focussing on family on this particular Australia Day. It coincides with the Fourth World Meeting of Families that is being held in Manila. A huge international gathering of families like this is a witness of hope for the whole world.

I will be leading a group of Australians to the World Meeting of Families. I invite you and your parishioners to be joined with us in prayer for the future of our nation and of our families on this occasion.

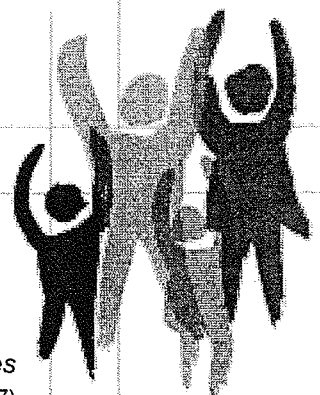
The enclosed parish kit is offered for use on Australia Day. It contains simple and practical suggestions for creating a lifestyle of forgiveness in our land.

Thank you for your ongoing support for families.

Yours in Christ,

**Bishop Eugene Hurley**

Chairman, Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life



*The future of humanity passes  
by way of the family (FC,17)*

# Notes for the Liturgy

Australia Day

## Homily Ideas

Readings: *Is 32:15-18; 1 Cor 12:4-11 or Rom 12:9-13; Mt 5:1-12 or Lk 12:22-32*

There is a well-known TV ad that shows Australian children in locations all over the world singing 'I still call Australia home'. Despite all the problems of our nation, no matter how far away we go, deep down we still have a sense of belonging to our home country. And we have a lot to thank God for: the beauty of our country, our great sporting record, the hosting of the Olympics – we've even led the world in economic growth lately! It is good to live in Australia.

### *My people will live in peace*

Today's readings raise our vision about the kind of society we can be and invite us to take a reality check. Some harsh realities include the widening gap between rich and poor, the plight of asylum seekers, one of the world's highest infant mortality rates amongst aborigines and the rising salinity of our soil that is destroying our land.

In today's first reading (*Is 32:15-18*) Isaiah speaks to Israel at a time when it is a small nation trying to make alliances to keep itself safe in a turbulent world. Isaiah points out a different path to safety: seek first the reign of God, then 'justice will bring about peace ... calm and security forever'. The second reading (*1 Cor 12:4-11*) reminds us that the Spirit flows freely and works wonderfully through all people of good will in our society. As Australians we can all work together to create a just society. The beatitudes in today's Gospel (*Mt 5:1-12*) gives us a blueprint for the kind of nation that Isaiah described.

### *World Day of Families*

While we celebrate Australia Day today, another celebration is taking place in Manila. The Pope has invited families of the world to come together to celebrate the family. Millions are expected to attend. A number of Australians will represent our nation there. This reminder of the role of the family is very relevant for us on this particular Australia Day.

Where do we most naturally learn to live the lifestyle that Jesus talks about in the Beatitudes? In the family! It is in the family that we learn to care for others, to thank and to say sorry. Of course our families are not perfect. However, they are the 'first schools and seminaries' of a caring society. There are many organizations that exist to care for people – hospitals, orphanages, charities, government departments. However the human face of these organizations is the people who work in them. And where do those people develop their spirit of care most readily? In the family!

Like no other time in our nation's history we are struggling to develop harmony, to replace confrontation with reconciliation. And the starting point of reconciliation is our homes.

So while we celebrate Australia Day let's also look at how we can reconcile with those nearest to us. The 'Peace in Our Land' leaflet contains three simple steps that anyone can apply. Let's try it this week as we build a nation of peace.

## Opening Prayer

God our Father, you guide everything in wisdom and love. On this Australia Day, accept our prayers for our nation; by the wisdom of our leaders and integrity of our citizens, may there be harmony, justice and lasting prosperity and peace.

## Penitential Rite

We come to the Father through Jesus, so as members of his body, the Church, we pray:

Lord, you show your love through the caring of those dearest to us. Lord, have mercy.

Lord, you show us the path to peace through the example of your life. Christ have mercy.

Lord, you call us to share your forgiveness with all whom we meet. Lord, have mercy.

## Prayers of the Faithful

### *Introduction:*

Let us place all our hopes for our nation in the loving hands of the Father as we express our deepest needs.

### *Intercessions:*

- For the Pope. and for all Church leaders, that they will inspire us by their courage.
- For civil leaders, that they work for peace, within our nation and beyond.
- For families, that they may recognise that their caring and acceptance form the basis of a compassionate nation.
- For a national spirit of reconciliation, that it may be practiced at every level.
- For those most in need in our nation, that they will find compassion and justice from those around them.

### *Conclusion:*

God of love, you designed humanity so that each of us should grow within the love of a family. In developing that love with members of our families may we share it with others and help to turn our nation into a land of peace and harmony. Amen.

## Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia. I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you. Alleluia.

## Communion Antiphon:

Happy the peacemakers; they shall be called sons and daughters of God.

## Final Blessing

May your family relationships be marked by acceptance and love. Amen.

May Jesus' example of forgiveness lead you to be examples of forgiveness in our nation. Amen.

And may the blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you and your family forever. Amen.

## Tips

for using these bulletin inserts and other materials in the kit:

### Take heart!

Simple, practical messages in the bulletin have a way of touching hearts and lives.

### Pick and choose

Choose the bulletin item that best applies to your parish situation. Or write your own using the ideas in this kit.

### Photocopy

Photocopy the leaflet 'Peace in Our Land' for distribution at Mass on Australia Day.

Copy and pass on the liturgy notes to those involved in the liturgy on Australia Day.

### Pray about it

It's amazing the difference prayer makes! Place these tasks before God and see how the Spirit leads...

### For maximum impact

- Organise a team of parishioners to hand out the leaflet 'Peace in our Land' with the parish bulletin as people arrive for Mass.
- Better still, prior to the weekend Masses ask a parishioner to insert a leaflet into each parish bulletin.
- Mention it from the pulpit or commentator's microphone at the beginning or end of Mass.
- Make the leaflet available to other groups in the parish for use in their weekly meetings (e.g. prayer groups, family groups, Antioch, St Vincent de Paul).
- From the pulpit, encourage parishioners to come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation\* in the coming week using the leaflet as the basis of an examination of conscience.

\* Note: Enhance your usual parish reconciliation time: e.g. play reflective music in the church; Include an appropriate Australian symbol to highlight the healing of our nation; Have extra copies of the leaflet on hand.

## 'Bits for the Bulletin'

### Peace begins at home



We all yearn for a safe country. As a nation we talk (or maybe argue) a lot about issues of peace and reconciliation. But it can all seem 'out there' - something that 'they' ought to do something about. This Australia Day you are invited to think about how you and your family can be part of the healing of our nation, making it a more deeply humane society. To assist you, take home a copy of the leaflet 'Peace in our Land.' Apply some of the ideas this week. Perhaps reflect on them at a family meal.



### Australia Day reflection

The leaflet 'Peace in our Land' is available today.

You are invited to take a copy home and apply some of the ideas to your family relationships.



### Australia Day Peace begins at home

We all yearn for peace in our our own hearts and homes. Here are 3 practical steps we can all take this week:

1. Each night this week, spend 5 minutes thanking God for signs of forgiveness and compassion in your family.
2. Spend 5 minutes each day meditating on Mt 5:44: 'Love your enemies...' Say the *Our Father* for one person who has hurt you.
3. Receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Refer to the leaflet 'Peace in our Land', available today.)



### Australia Day reflection

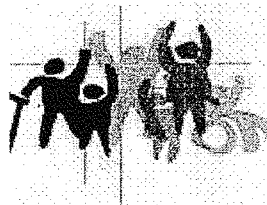
'The future of humanity passes by way of the family.' These words of Pope John Paul II highlight the vital link between family life and the level of love and compassion in society. This Australia Day, you and your family are invited to take three practical steps towards the healing of our nation. Refer to the take-home leaflet: 'Peace in our Land'.

### Today!

#### World Meeting of Families

Did you know that today, while we are relaxing at the beach or the barbecue, one of the biggest meetings in human history is taking place in Manila: the World Meeting of Families - a celebration of the power of family love to influence, change and heal societies. More information: [www.family2003.ph](http://www.family2003.ph)

### *The future of humanity passes by way of the family* (FC,17)



The parish kit *Peace in Our Land* is published by the **Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life**, January 2003. For further copies of this kit, phone (02) 9349 1710 or fax (02) 9349 8538. Cost: \$5 per kit. The kit is also available on the website of the Australian

Catholic Bishops' Conference [www.catholic.org.au](http://www.catholic.org.au). With the exception of the *Landmarks* leaflet, the material may be photocopied for non-commercial church use.

To purchase additional copies of the *Landmarks* leaflet ('Peace, Justice, Forgiveness'), contact The Story Source Tel/Fax (02) 9314 0867 Email: [storysource@ozemail.com.au](mailto:storysource@ozemail.com.au).



## Tips for families

- Pray as a family.
- At family prayer time, create an opportunity to give and receive forgiveness.
- If a face-to-face apology is difficult, write a love letter of forgiveness.
- Discuss different ways of saying sorry to each other.
- Teach your children the significance of the sign of peace during Mass.
- Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a family. Celebrate afterwards with a special meal or outing.

### A forgiving home

For years after my divorce I prayed that I would be a good parent to my children. Then one day it dawned on me that the best prayer I could pray was a prayer of forgiveness. Jack had left me and I had never forgiven him for that. My prayer changed as I asked God to fill me with a forgiving heart. I began to focus my prayer on healing the wounds from my married life, knowing that the more at peace I was with my ex-husband, the more at peace my children would be. (Terry)

## World Meeting of Families

Did you know that today, while we are relaxing at the beach or the barbecue, one of the biggest meetings in human history is taking place in Manila: the World Meeting of Families - a celebration of the power of family love to influence, change and heal societies.

For more information: [www.family2003.ph](http://www.family2003.ph)

## Pray at home

*Heavenly Father, your Son, Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.'*

*Show us the Way.*

*Let our footsteps be a sign for those looking for direction, a welcome to those joining the journey and a testimony that Jesus walks with us all.*

*Show us the Truth,*

*so that we may live the Truth of the Gospel by defending life at every stage, safeguarding the dignity of each family member and living the message of Jesus, 'Love one another.'*

*Show us your Life.*

*Let our lives be symbols of hope for those longing for family, those seeking community and for those searching for identity in our country.*

*Bless our country and may our land be a haven of peace,*

*hope and love. We*

*ask this through*

*your Son, Jesus*

*Christ. Amen.*

© Australian Catholic Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life, January 2003.

Text and design: Family Working Group assisted by The Story Source. This leaflet may be photocopied for non-commercial church use.

Australia Day

# PEACE in our land

## How families can help to heal our nation

### Australia Day!

Today is a special day set aside to mark our nationhood. It is good to celebrate our identity as Australians. We have much for which to thank God.

Such a day should also evoke some deep sensitivities:

- To those who are disadvantaged and who suffer;
- To the aboriginal people and the dynamics of reconciliation;
- To refugees who seek to join us;
- To issues of peace, at home and abroad.

### Peace begins at home

We all yearn for a safe country. As a nation, we talk (or maybe argue!) a lot about issues of peace and reconciliation. But it can all seem to be 'out there' – something that 'they' ought to do something about.

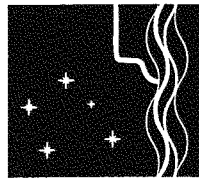
Pope John Paul II has stated that *'The future of humanity passes by way of the family.'* (FC, 86)

This Australia Day, we invite you to think about how *your* family can be part of the healing of our nation, making it a more deeply humane and loving society.

# Three steps *(which everyone can do at home)* to heal a nation

We can't change the world or Australia overnight. But we can (overnight!) decide to take responsibility for ourselves and our tiny corner of Australia.

Let's look at three healing steps that we can apply *this week* in our own personal situation - in our own homes, in our families and extended families.



## Step 1: Celebrate what is good

If we can't recognise our own goodness, how can we aspire to greater goodness? The path to peace requires a fundamental optimism about our capacity to love, to forgive and to be peace-makers.

It is easy to take goodness for granted, yet forgiveness and peace-making is a reality in so many families. Take marriage, for example. No relationship could last a month, let alone decades, if there were no forgiveness. Married couples forgive each other repeatedly every day of their lives - for not listening, taking

each other for granted, sarcastic comments, and so on. This kind of dynamic is so common we tend to dismiss it. But at heart these are acts of forgiveness, the *growth points* of the relationship.

### Exercise 1:

Each night this week, spend five minutes thinking of examples of forgiveness that you noticed in your family lately. Thank God for this.

### Turning point

*My teenage son had been charged for a minor offence. I was annoyed because the Court required that he attend a series of police lectures with a parent. I felt embarrassed at having to go and couldn't forgive my son. Coming home from the final lecture, I couldn't even speak to him. As we were getting out of the car, the words of the Our Father came to me: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those...' I saw that my embarrassment was trivial compared to my love for my son. I turned to him and told him this. I promised him that, no matter what, I would always be with him. (CN)*

## Step 2: Pray



Some hurts are incredibly devastating - sexual abuse, destructive behaviours, mental and physical cruelty - to name a few. Some hurts are minor, but they still hurt. Being human, we all carry some brokenness in our relationships. When we are most hurt, Jesus is most able to bring healing into our lives.

Through prayer we can experience Christ's healing touch. We might pray to find the goodness that is in the person who hurt us. We might pray to let go of the anger in our hearts. We might simply pray that we do not lose hope. Sometimes all that we can do in a situation is to kneel humbly at the foot of the cross, in the sure knowledge that in our hurt we can share in the redemptive mission of Jesus himself.

### Exercise 2:

Spend 5 minutes each day meditating on Mt 5:44: 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.' Then say the *Our Father* for one person who has hurt you.

## Step 3:

## Forgive. And ask for forgiveness



It is easy to say 'nobody is perfect.' It is not so easy to ask for forgiveness for my imperfections. Asking for forgiveness is something that we can do any time. It is our decision. However, we can't demand forgiveness. We can only ask, knowing that the other party may not be ready to respond at this time. When we ask God for forgiveness, we can be certain of instantly being forgiven, because God is perfect love.

Life presents many opportunities to forgive and be forgiven: in our daily interactions ('I'm sorry'), in prayer ('Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...'), at key points of the Eucharistic celebration ('Lord have mercy') and in the Church's powerful sacraments of Reconciliation and Healing.

### Exercise 3:

This week, note the opportunities for forgiveness that come your way. Let these opportunities lead you to more frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**'The ability to forgive lies at the very basis of the idea of a future society marked by justice and solidarity.'** - Pope John Paul II