



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

The Strength and Blessing of Indigenous Family Life is the focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

**Media release
30 June 2017**

Despite the devastating effects of colonisation, the dispossession of families in rural areas and the accompanying social dislocation, the strength and unity of Aboriginal families has survived, Bishop Eugene Hurley, Chairman of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, said at the release of the 2017 pastoral letter to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ASTI) Sunday.

'All Australians can learn and benefit from the kinship model of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.'

The Bishop of Broome, Christopher Saunders, drafted the statement titled, "*The Strength and Blessing of Indigenous Family Life*" on behalf of the Commission to mark ATSI Sunday across the Church in Australia on 2 July 2017.

Bishop Saunders said, 'The customary family practice of collective responsibility for the raising of children and the kinship system are still largely at work across a range of Aboriginal communities today'.

Bishop Saunders wrote that 'while indigenous languages across the continent continued throughout our history of settlement to diminish in number and usage, nonetheless the strength of family relationships and the power that gives to the struggle to survive has proved enduring'.

In the past, he has written, 'families were torn asunder through the removal of children of mixed race, from their families, by governmental policies. This resulted in what is known today as "The Stolen Generation" or "The Separated Children". And yet, the bonds of family life persevered and survived these overwhelming tribulations.

'However, in our fast moving society, sadly, when every culture in our land is in crisis, other grievous trials continue to assail the strength and blessings of indigenous families as they do non-indigenous families.'

In his statement, the Bishop of Broome also highlighted that 'we should never be afraid to speak out against racism or discrimination or anything that harms the family or threatens the integrity of our society'.

'Like the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, let us do our best to see to it that families today continue to strive to be examples of peace and harmony, of commitment and solidarity, of sacredness and wholesomeness.

'Prayer is our power at hand, we should not be afraid to use it enthusiastically because it helps to hold families together as it sustains the love all peoples hope for.'

The ATSI Sunday Statement is available to download from the Bishops Conference website homepage at <https://www.catholic.org.au/>



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

A flipping book of the Statement is also available at,

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/3iecuymnfqamn6v/AAC_eZ4SCs-fzCrs2_KjLqTla?dl=0

A4 High Quality Web Version [5mb]

https://www.dropbox.com/s/9nzpcw8p9mwimdo/ATSI_Sunday_2017%20%5BA4%5D%20WEB.pdf?dl=0

A4 Low Quality Email Version [2.9mb]

https://www.dropbox.com/s/hjosbbuz2dmtu0w/ATSI_Sunday_2017%20%5BA4%5D%20Email.pdf?dl=0

Media queries, please contact Aoife Connors on 0450 348 597.