



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release – June 27, 2008

Catholic parishes urged to “Celebrate the Living Spirit” for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

Catholic parishes across Australia will be invited to take up the theme “Celebrate the Living Spirit” in celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Sunday on Sunday, July 6.

Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), Elsie Heiss, said liturgical resources had been developed to help parishes observe this special day on the Australian Church calendar.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is one of our main celebrations of the year, where Australians come together in the Church to celebrate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” Mrs Heiss said.

“There have been many reasons to celebrate our culture over the past years. One of the most significant has been this year, in February 2008, which was the apology from the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and his government to Australia’s Indigenous peoples.”

Mrs Heiss said the theme of “Celebrate the Living Spirit” reflects the World Youth Day theme, which also focuses on the Holy Spirit.

“World Youth Day is one of the main focuses in July, celebrating the Holy Spirit. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth will gather together with all Australians to welcome the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to this Great Southern Land. I hope and pray that the national apology and World Youth Day event will bring us closer on our journey to reconciliation in this country”.

Bishop Brian Heenan of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders urged parishes to take advantage of the liturgical resources which have been prepared, so that the day can be celebrated in the best possible way.

Bishop Heenan said the National Apology to the Stolen Generations was a great milestone in the life of the nation, but that the Church community must back this up with action at the local level.

“We, as a Church, must celebrate this milestone but also ensure that our Indigenous sisters and brothers feel welcome in our communities, our parishes, and our dioceses,” he said. “By honouring them in our liturgies or remembering them if they cannot be present, we make a clear statement that we want them to feel they are totally accepted, fully welcome and given the dignity they so richly deserve.”

The NATSICC resources for the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday can be downloaded from the ACBC website at <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/org/natsicc/20080610544.htm>.

Media contact: NATSICC on 08 8223 5244 or Craig Arthur on 0402 019 536.