

On Friday the 13th February it was the seventh anniversary of the Apology given to the Indigenous peoples of Australia by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. It was a unreserved apology and it was of particularly importance to the stolen generations. While the Howard government saw the apology as unnecessary, the Indigenous people of Australia cried out for it. Although the Apology may have been dismissed by some as merely symbolic, we should remember that all symbols name a deeper truth and in this case it is a very sad truth indeed. An overwhelming number of Australians saw Prime Minister Rudd's speech as a positive step in the path of Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens of this country. Along with the Apology several future aspirations were also presented as common goals for the welfare and justice for Indigenous people.

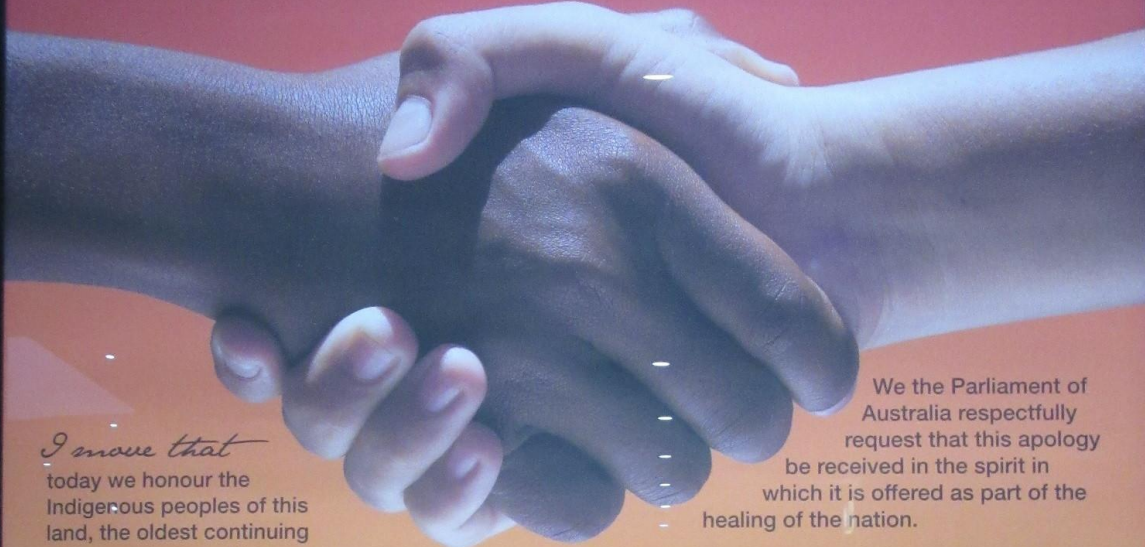
To remind us of this significant event in our history an edited version of the Prime Minister's speech has been placed in the entrance to Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Caloundra. I must be very clear that I do not place the speech in the Church to advance the cause of the Indigenous in Australia or in our local area. I have neither the knowledge nor the right to do so. However, I cannot avoid advancing the cause of Reconciliation! If the Apology given in 2008 is to have any merit or ongoing worth then it will urge us all to learn more and understand better a culture and spirituality that is so much older and so very different to our own. A deeper awareness and better understanding of each other will hopefully assist in bringing us closer, to reconcile us to all Australians.

A fundamental tenet of our Christian faith is the call to communion- a connectedness that is stronger than blood and lasts until the day of eternity. We acknowledge that communion with all people when we share what we have with the less fortunate, wherever they may live in the world. When we are more conscious of the use of the earth's limited resources we are acknowledging our communion with the natural environment. Sometimes that communion needs to be repaired - to be reconciled and that will inevitably cost something. Let us pray for the openness of heart and the generosity of spirit that will enable us to be a reconciled nation who respect and acknowledge the dignity of all people both in Australia and those beyond our shores.

"If you would like further information regarding the cause for Reconciliation and perhaps become involved in our local region please visit the web site of The Sunshine Coast Reconciliation Group."

***God bless,
Fr Kevin.***

Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples



I move that

today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

We reflect on their past mistreatment. We reflect in particular on the mistreatment of those who were Stolen Generations—this blemished chapter in our nation's history.

The time has now come for the nation to turn a new page in Australia's history by righting the wrongs of the past and so moving forward with confidence to the future.

We apologise for the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. We apologise especially for the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, their communities and their country.

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry.

To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry.

And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.

We the Parliament of Australia respectfully request that this apology be received in the spirit in which it is offered as part of the healing of the nation.

For the future we take heart; resolving that this new page in the history of our great continent can now be written.

We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians.

A future where this Parliament resolves that the injustices of the past must never, never happen again...

Growing from this new respect, we see our Indigenous brothers and sisters with fresh eyes, with new eyes, and we have our minds wide open as to how we might tackle, together, the great practical challenges that Indigenous Australia faces in the future.

Let us turn this page together: Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, government and opposition, Commonwealth and state, and write this new chapter in our nation's story together. First Australians, First Fleeters, and those who first took the oath of allegiance just a few weeks ago. Let's grasp this opportunity to craft a new future for this great land: Australia.

*I commend the motion
to the house.*

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, MP
Wednesday, February 13, 2008