



Easter to Pentecost Discussion Series

“VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS”



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE



Edmund Rice Centre

AWARENESS • ADVOCACY • ACTION

Developed in collaboration with the **Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education** based in Sydney.

EASTER TO PENTECOST DISCUSSION SERIES

“VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS”

PREAMBLE

In September 2021, Archbishop Mark Coleridge publicly endorsed the *Uluru Statement From the Heart* and made an historic commitment on behalf of the Catholic Church to support First Nation leaders in advocating for a constitutional Voice. “What has been done to the Indigenous peoples of this land could only have been done by denying that they were in fact human – they were at best perhaps subhuman... God is going to take out of us that heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh – the heart of Jesus ... that recognises the other as a human being,” Archbishop Coleridge said whilst standing on Quandamooka country at the Santa Teresa Spirituality Centre in Ormiston.

OVERVIEW OF DISCUSSION

Over the seven weeks from Easter to Pentecost, Catholic groups, especially in parishes, are invited to reflect on what the *Uluru Statement From the Heart* is asking of all Australians. These four discussion sessions can take place anytime in that seven week period, and are an opportunity for Catholics to find out why the Voice to Parliament is important to First Nations people and why the Catholic Bishops are supporting the call for a Voice to Parliament. The season of Easter reminds us of the new life and hope for the future expressed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. At Pentecost, the Apostles are emboldened when filled with the Holy Spirit to carry out the mission of Jesus to reconcile all people to God and to each other. In this season we are invited to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we listen to the cry from the hearts of First Nations leaders. We are invited to consider the question: how are we to respond as followers of Jesus and as a nation?

These four sessions, spread over seven weeks between Easter and Pentecost, are designed to go for roughly one and a half hours, with reflections and prayers included.

CREATING A WELCOMING SPACE

How to prepare your discussion area – Use of gum leaves, Aboriginal print material, a copy of the *Statement From the Heart*, the Apology, Aboriginal candle, or other artefacts (coolamon, Aboriginal art work, clapsticks or Aboriginal cross)

Music suggestions: For introduction or during reflection time, show clip or play music.

Wiyathul, by Gurrumul - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lmZXAdSMQI>
A sacred totemic dance about the Wiyathul Bird, and a song about longing for place.

Other Resources:

Dadirru with Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pahz_WBSSdA

Statement From the Heart
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=YJrHStMY1Gg>

VOICE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

OUTLINE OF THE SESSION

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God,
 May I hear your Voice as I reflect upon Holy Scripture.
 May I hear your Voice from the mouths of the poor and excluded.
 May I hear your Voice as your creation echoes your Voice.
 May I hear your Voice as I attend to the still small Voice within me.
 Give me, O Lord a humble and open heart to hear what
 your Voice is saying, and the courage to act. Amen.



(A different person from the group is invited to do each of the readings)

1 Kings 19:11-12

Then the LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD. Behold, the LORD is about to pass by.” And a great and mighty wind tore into the mountains and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a still, small voice.

John 1:23

John the Baptist said, “*I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’*” as the prophet Isaiah said.

(Quietly reflect on Scripture for 2 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the features of a wilderness? Are they all bad? What are the good features?
2. Why do you think Jesus, John Baptist and the prophets spent time in wilderness?
3. How was the prophet Ezekiel able to recognise the voice of God in the book of Kings?
4. How do you prepare to hear the voice of God speaking to you?

“We are called to discover Christ in the poor, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them and to welcome the mysterious wisdom that God wants to communicate to us through them.” Pope Francis

LISTENING - MIRIAM-ROSE UNGUNMERR-BAUMANN

Dadirri is a unique gift of the Aboriginal people, it is inner deep listening and quiet stillness. It recognises the deep spring that is inside us. It is something like contemplation. We know that in time and in the spirit of Dadirri (that deep listening and quiet stillness) the way will be made clear. The contemplative way of Dadirri spreads over our whole life. It renews us and brings us peace.



READ THIS QUOTE FROM THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was your experience of First Nations Peoples as you grew up?
2. What are things you have learnt from First Nations Culture in your life?
3. What do you think Miriam-Rose means by Dadirri - "inner deep listening"?
4. What is something you could learn from Miriam-Rose in your daily life?
5. What does the *Uluru Statement From the Heart* quote show us about First Nations people's spirituality?

CLOSING PRAYER (Claude Mostowik)

God of all Creation,
We who have come from every land
Give thanks for the land we call Australia.
This earth that feeds us; the stories that bind us;
The skies that envelop us in freedom.

Nourished by the rich gifts of the First Peoples
And their 60000 years of spiritual connection to this Country,
We all want to feel accepted and respected.
Let us walk together and listen with open hearts to each other.

Let us look back with courage; see the truth and speak it.
Let us look around with compassion; see the cost and share it.
Let us look forward with hope; see what can be and create it.
Give us the gift of your Spirit to face the truth,
We ask this through Jesus our brother and Lord.

Amen.

A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

WELCOME & INTRODUCTION – ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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 your Voice is saying, and the courage to act. Amen.



(A different person from the group is invited to do each of the readings)

Ezekiel 36:26

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.

Psalms 95:8

Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts
 as you did at Meribah in the day at Massah in the wilderness,

(Quietly reflect on Scripture for 2 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Ezekiel mean by *heart of stone*?
2. What are some examples of hard heartedness in our world?
3. How do we remove the *heart of stone* and put in a *heart of flesh*?
4. What would that mean in terms of our relationship with others?

“Those who are most wounded, oppressed and even crushed, are the poor, the weakest links in the chain... by focusing on the poor, the Church asks us not to turn aside, not to be afraid to take a close look at the suffering of those most vulnerable.”
 Pope Francis

READ THIS QUOTE FROM THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do First Nations leaders see as signs of a *heart of stone* that are affecting their people?
2. Who do you think the calls from the Uluru Statement are aimed at - politicians or everyday Australians?
3. What are some ways we can develop a *heart of flesh* and help others develop a *heart of flesh*?
4. How would this impact the way we treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

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Amen.

THE LORD HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR

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(A different person from the group is invited to do each of the readings)

Psalm 34:17-18

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.
 The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Matthew 8:2-3

And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." And he stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

(Quietly reflect on Scripture for 2 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the Lord respond to the broken-hearted?
2. What do you notice about how close God comes to those crushed in spirit?
3. What do you notice about how Jesus responds to the leper?
4. Can you describe feeling God's presence in a moment when your spirit felt crushed?

Certainly, what has been done cannot be undone. But what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow... The establishment of a new society for Aboriginal people cannot go forward without just and mutually recognized agreements with regard to these human problems, even though their causes lie in the past.
 Saint (Pope) John Paul II Address to Aboriginal People – Alice Springs 1986

DISCUSSION QUESTION

1. What does Saint (Pope) John Paul II mean by “the deeds of yesterday”?

READ THESE QUOTES FROM THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART (referring to the quote from the last session)

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness...

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think First Nations people mean by “the torment of our powerlessness”?
2. What do you think is meant by “structural nature of the problem”?
3. What are First Nations people seeking in order to solve the problem?

“Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid.” Pope Francis

CLOSING PRAYER (Claude Mostowik)

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Amen.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME

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Acts 2: 1-5

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

(Quietly reflect on Scripture for 2 minutes)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the symbols of the Spirit used here?
2. What are the Apostles like before the arrival of the Spirit?
3. How do they react after they are filled with the Holy Spirit?
4. Why do you think they are able to speak in other languages?

Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Jesus respond to the Spirit?
2. Who are the groups that he is sent to bring good news to and how does he help them?
3. Who do you think are the poor and oppressed in our society today?

Read or watch the statement and reflect on it for 2 - 3 minutes.
What is the passage is saying to you?



ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Uluru 27 May 2017

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent, and its adjacent islands and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is a *spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise?
That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their

families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

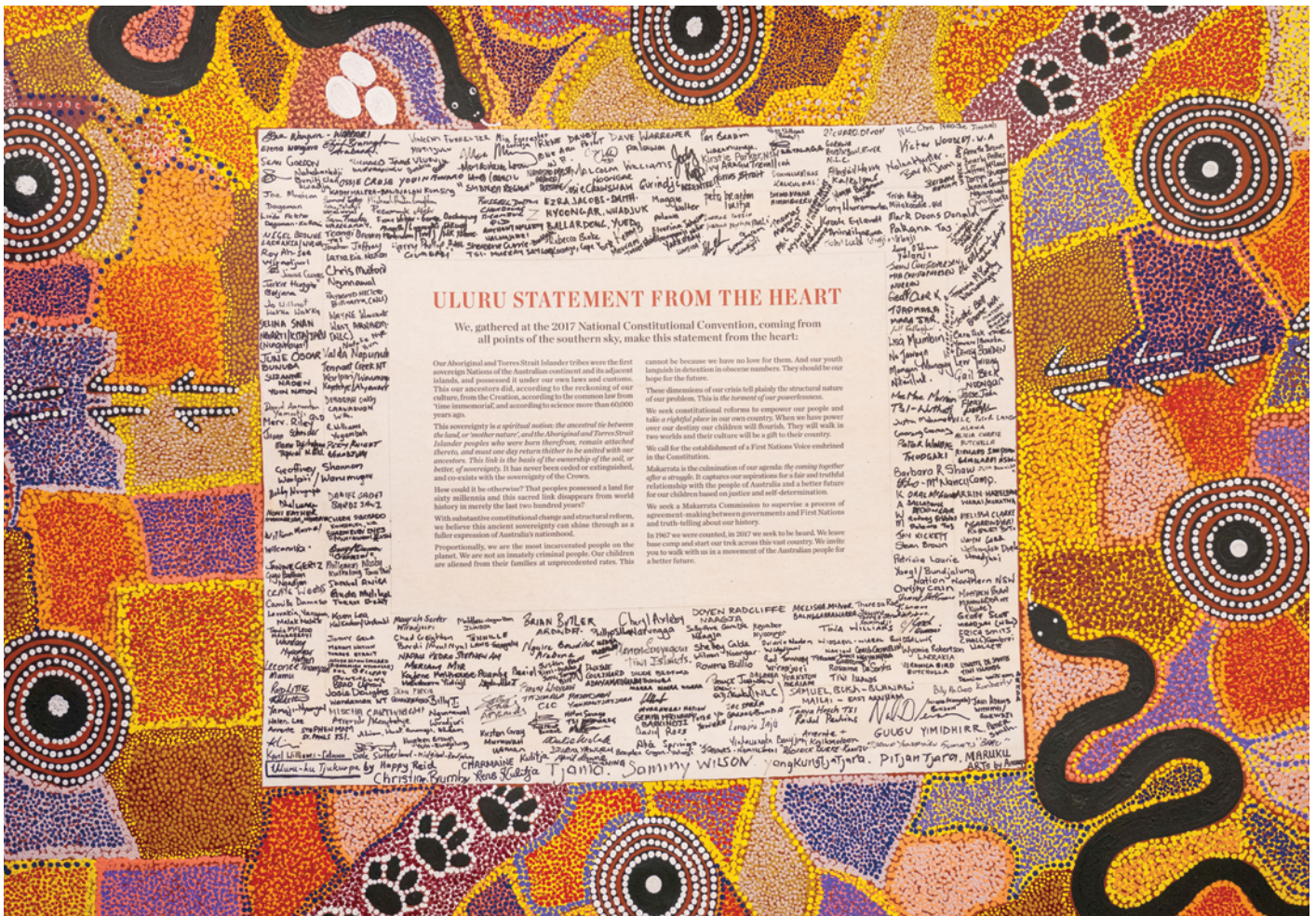
We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it is called Statement from the Heart?
2. What words strike you in this statement?
3. What is it like to be listened to?
4. What do you think these invitations say to you?

SUMMARY

Catholics who follow Jesus are disciples who, having encountered God in prayer, have a vision of what life could be like when God is in charge and not governed by human politics. This vision enables the disciple to see the gap between how things could be and how they actually are, especially for the poor.

Catholics are asked to open their hearts to hear what the voice of the Holy Spirit is saying and what First Nations people are asking. People are free to choose however they vote, and still be good Catholics, regardless of their decision. We are simply asking, "What are you hearing? How do you think you should respond as a follower of Jesus?"

As Pope Francis says:

“The great biblical tradition enjoins on all peoples the duty to hear the voice of the poor. It bids us to break the bonds of injustice and oppression which give rise to glaring, and indeed, scandalous social inequalities. Reforming the social structures which perpetuate poverty, and the exclusion of the poor first requires a conversion of mind and heart.”

ABORIGINAL BLESSING (Elizabeth Pike)

May you stand as tall as a tree
Be as gentle as the morning mist
And as strong as the earth under your feet.
May the warmth of the campfire
Be in your heart and mind
And may the Creator Spirit
of our traditional owners
Always watch over you.

CLOSING PRAYER (Claude Mostowik)

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Give us the gift of your Spirit to face the truth,
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Amen.



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