



Prot: 19200:MMsdp_1102

6 June 2019

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ

Re: Pentecost 2019 Pastoral Letter

In 1988, the World Expo came to Queensland and one of the most popular pavilions was New Zealand. Not far from this pavilion was the Vatican Expo and two displays there caught my attention. One, a marble statue of a young Palestinian Shepherd with a lamb over his shoulders titled 'The Good Shepherd'. The second exhibit was a map of Australia drawn around the year 1676 with the commentary:

Cardinals of the Congregation for the Evangelisations of Nations consider in 1676 a proposal from the Italian Priest Father Victorio Riccio op, based in Manila from a hand drawn map become a mission of the Roman Catholic Church. The information came from sailors and from indigenous.

In 1606, Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, declared the land mass The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit, which was later confirmed by Vatican decree. The Holy Spirit has been with this country and Pope John Paul II in his 1986 address to the Indigenous referred to this and extended it further as follows;

As the human family spread over the face of the earth, your people settled and lived in this big country that stood apart from all the others. Other people did not even know this land was here; they only knew that somewhere in the southern oceans of the world there was "The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit".

But for thousands of years you have lived in this land and fashioned a culture that endures to this day. And during all this time, the Spirit of God has been with you. Your "Dreaming", which influences your lives so strongly that, no matter what happens, you remain for ever people of your culture, is your only way of touching the mystery of God's Spirit in you and in creation. You must keep your striving for God and hold on to it in your lives.

These powerful words of Saint Pope John Paul reminds us that in God's mind, this land of Australia has always been the Land of the Holy Spirit and this powerful aspect of God is still with us today inspiring and nurturing deep within the inner core of our being and within our Land. This spirit of God gives us the strength we need to stand and be counted as the followers of Christ, the missionary disciples who are co-responsible participants in his mission.

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During these past years, the Church has received many challenges, especially on its stand on the sanctity of life. These challenges are still before us. As the agendas of governments across the country push through our parliaments reforms they believe will make Australia a better place; respect for the sanctity of life in its beginning and in its end are eroded by anti-life legislation and threats to religious freedom, especially the sanctity of the confessional. The Holy Spirit who has guided the peoples of this land for tens of thousands of years is there for our strength, as community and voters, to continue to place our Catholic views before legislators and governments and our own elected representatives. These issues are not just election matters.

The second reading at mass for Pentecost Sunday reminds us that there are a variety of gifts. We all have a gift to offer and it is for the building up of the Church. The Acts of the Apostles leaves us in no doubt, the Holy Spirit is given for activity and we all share in that Spirit, a gift of Jesus and the Father.

As we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost, I also look forward to Pentecost Sunday 2020 where I invite you all to Rockhampton for a great weekend of celebrations of the Holy Spirit. Further information on this will be shared in due course.

This coming week I will be leaving for the Cochin Diocese, India and then Rome for my Ad Limina visit, where I will meet with Pope Francis on Monday 24 June – the Feast of John the Baptist. I will keep you all in my prayers while on Ad Limina.

Lastly, after Pentecost, the Senior Parish Priests of the Diocese will each spend a month in the Parishes of the Central West. I am indeed grateful to their parish communities and to the priests engaging in the mission to all our Diocese. This will place considerable strain on each parish community, but it is in solidarity that we work together as a Diocese for the mission of Christ.

May God shower our Diocese with many blessings.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael McCarthy".

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton