

## NAIDOC MASS HOMILY

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Long, long ago in the Dreaming a little gum tree grew up very strong. It grew bigger and bigger and the shade from it was very nice. But it was very lonely and it was hoping that one day it might have some friends. Sure enough one day the first friend came along it was a little canary, who came to build a nest, then cicada, then a witchetty grub, lots of birds, even snakes and possums. The kookaburra would wake everyone in the morning. All who lived together said the lovely big gumtree kept them safe from the hot sun and the rains and floods. Jesus was on his own at first, but when he talked to people they listened, no matter what colour they were. Jesus, like the gumtree, was a safe place to be together and help each other.

*'Black Lives Matter'* is the slogan that comes to mind this year for the Naidoc commemoration. So does the agonizing cry, *'I can't breathe'*, uttered by George Floyd in Minneapolis, U. S. A., as he lay on the ground with a policeman kneeling on his neck for 8 minutes. The policeman, Derek Chauvin, has since been charged with murder, and his fellow policemen with aiding and abetting second degree murder. Black people protested against the violence all across the United States, and in other countries around the world, including Australia. The protests continued unabated for a week.

All this can blind us to our situation in Australia. In 1987-1991 we had a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Black Deaths in custody. There were 42 deaths to be investigated. Now nearly 30 years later the figure has blown out to 432. This is a shameful statistic. We can hardly accuse others overseas of human rights abuses. As Jesus said, *'How can you say to your brother or sister, Let me take the splinter out of your eye when there is a plank in your own eye?'*

There is no desire to control, force, or gain control by violence by Jesus, as is the case with our black brothers and sisters by the law enforcement agencies in Australia and America. Jesus was never violent with the poor, with lepers, with marginal people. He felt compassion for them, was aggrieved, and he helped them, without regard for his own safety, reputation and good name.

The 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart referred to their (Aboriginal) *"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."*

Religion can enslave us. This is not what Jesus came for. He came to set us free, to lift the burdens that oppress us, to liberate us from everything that would enslave us. The Dreaming is a reminder to us of the great, undying love of God for us for all ages. The great Dreaming prayer will be prayed this morning.

National NAIDOC Week 2020 celebrations will be held from the 8-15 November. The November dates follow the decision by the National NAIDOC Committee to postpone NAIDOC

Week from the original July dates due to the impacts and uncertainty from the escalating Coronavirus pandemic. 2020 NAIDOC Week Poster Winner '*Shape of Land*' was Tyrown Waigana, from Perth, W. A., judged by the National NAIDOC Committee to have best illustrated the 2020 NAIDOC theme: *Always Was Always Will Be*, recognises that First Nations people have occupied and cared for this continent for over 65,000 years.