



**28th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)
National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Sunday**

Homily

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxtton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

**St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Sunday 15 October, 2023**

I offer a very warm welcome to the people of the First Nations to the Cathedral. This is the home for the Catholics of the Archdiocese of Perth, the Mother Church, where each person is welcome and can find their place among brothers and sisters.

It is providential that we gather on the day following the referendum. This will be the first day of prayer and reflection on the outcome of the referendum, so our hope is that Mass will be the most significant prayer for all our people and the great sign that Jesus walks with us into a new beginning that is opening up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and every other Australian in our land.

The Australian Catholic Bishops have given much encouragement to the people to read and discuss the referendum proposition and the background document, the Uluru Statement, to the ideas of recognition of the indigenous peoples in the Constitution and an advisory body, the Voice, for First Nation people to contribute to decision-making regarding them by government. This was necessary, the important first step for each of us understanding what the referendum was about.

It became obvious to us that we all needed to become informed so that in good conscience we could decide the right way forward.

In light of the vote yesterday, the bishops commit themselves to looking forward and contributing to the hoped-for new beginning in reconciliation and collaboration with our First Nations brothers and sisters.

The Gospel of today's Mass has something to say to us at this moment of history. Jesus spoke of the call to work with him to bring about change so that the kingdom of God can be seen more clearly as it breaks into and transforms the world to be more just and committed to peace. He referred to the history of his own people: the history of the prophets and the kings.



In general, many of the prophets were treated appallingly by the kings and people of power. The history of the kings was not something to be proud of, as one good and faithful king would so often be followed by a weak one, whose decisions offended God because of the self-interest behind them.

Government is not an easy responsibility and compromise is always the dog at the heels of legislators.

What has become apparent to the Australian people is that the goals of Closing the Gap have largely not been achieved. Initiatives established by one government have been changed or weakened by its successor. We need to keep our eyes on government and make them accountable. We need to support the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in advising and working with the agencies set up to advance the goals of Closing the Gap.

The way forward and the new beginning is to be found in building relationships and trust. This will be the way of Christ to build the kingdom of justice, peace and reconciliation.