

31st Sunday of the Year 2021

October 31, 2021

Suggested formula for recognition of indigenous people and their land.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where we are now gathered (the)

- land which was never ceded-

and recognise that it continues to be sacred to them.

We hail them: as guardians of the earth and of all things that grow and breed in the soil; as trustees of the waters – [the seas, the streams and rivers, the ponds and the lakes] - and the rich variety of life in those waters.

We thank them for passing this wisdom and heritage to every people since the Dreamtime. We acknowledge the wrongs done to them by newcomers to this land and we seek to be partners with them in righting these wrongs and in living together in peace and harmony with them and with the land.

As we do this, we must also acknowledge the loss of their hunting grounds, the destruction of their ceremonial places and sacred sites, and the great loss of life from all kinds of violence and disease.

May we acknowledge the voices of the people and listen to them and receive the gift of the Voice from the Heart.

If we are to love our neighbours, before doing anything else we must see our neighbours.

With our imagination as well as our eyes, that is to say like artists, we must see not just their faces but the life behind and within their faces.

Here it is love that is the frame we see them in.

*Frederick Buechner, **Whistling in the Dark***

The beauty that will save the world is the love that shares the pain.

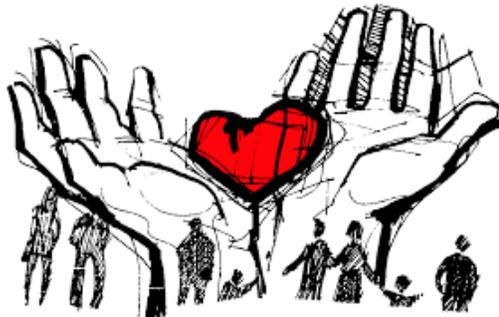
Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini former Archbishop of Milan, recently deceased.

The only thing worth globalising is dissent.

Arundhati Roy

Pity the nation that acclaims the bully as hero, and that deems the glittering conqueror bountiful.

Kahlil Gibran, from **The Garden of the Prophet**



If we could spread love as quickly as we spread hate and negativity, what an amazing world we would live in.



Readings

First Reading Deuteronomy 6:2-6

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 18:2-3, 3-4, 47, 51

Second Reading Hebrews 7:23-28

Gospel Mark 12:28-34

Opening Prayer

God of loving kindness,
you have committed yourself to us
in a covenant of lasting love
in the person of Jesus.
May we respond to you
with the whole of our being
and to live your commandments
as opportunities to love you
in our neighbour and care for all creation.

or

Opening Prayer [alternative]

God of loving kindness,
direct our steps
in our everyday efforts
to be your presence in our world.
May the changing moods
of the human heart
and the limits which we impose on hope
never blind us to your presence
in our sisters and brothers and all creation.

Reflections on the readings

The two themes that merge in the readings are the commandment to love God and neighbour. We see that concretely expressed in Ruth's love for, and commitment to, Naomi in the non-Catholic selection for today's liturgy, whereas in Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the people to wholeheartedly love God and by implication, one's neighbour by obeying the commandments.

The readings suggest that true generosity, kindness and putting others before our own needs leads to an abundant life. Today's double-edged gospel commandment demands a face, race, gender, age; the acknowledgment of the other as a neighbour, a sister or brother. The question put to Cain in Genesis, 'where is your brother (sister)' is implicit in each passage of scripture. Love and compassion are not soft and idealistic, but practical, sacrificial, and very powerful. It has little to do with legalistic observance of exclusionary laws that isolate people on the edges and lock them into positions of subservience and subordination. But, it is these very people who can find great meaning in a tradition that prioritises the needs of vulnerable and oppressed people often referred to as widows, orphans, and foreigners. This is particularly relevant as people continue to resist unjust laws and try to find security and safety across borders. Today's readings place God's law above all human legislation – irrespective of those that govern borders, the lives of women, sexual identity and ethnic minorities. It is in the loving heart of God present in Jesus that provokes subversion and resistance. Human laws must take a back seat to love of God and love of neighbour as we see in Exodus, Deuteronomy, the Psalms, and prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Zechariah, and Malachi. It is in this prophetic tradition that Jesus appears where putting anything above God's law is sinful. Jesus' response to the lawyer subverts any religion or empire that is prepared to sacrifice women, children, Indigenous people, our young people and the asylum seeker and migrant to national security and law and order. The God Jesus reveals champions the poor and vulnerable and places love of neighbour above all national laws. This God stands with the enslaved, with mothers who have lost husbands, with children orphaned by wars, with people at the borders of our countries seeking peace, and freedom and subjected to 'zero tolerance policies.'

We know the pain of inadequate love in people's lives and communities. We know the pain of neglect when we rich people ignore the poor who live beside them. Marriages and relationships fall apart through carelessness and neglect. People are marginalised because party political agendas are more important than Jesus' call to love. On a more global level, war, conflict and poverty result from hatred and meanness where personal or political or national agenda is put before the common good. Climate change comes from a failure to respect, love, appreciate what God has created.

We can often fail to give the faces we meet with a name, a story, a history whether it is the seller of the **Big Issue** or the person begging on the street. Faces. Names. Stories. Histories. The lawyer in the gospel wanted to reduce all 613 tenets of the law into one summary statement – and Jesus obliges. It is a teaching that needs to be enshrined and enfolded in our lives. It needs to have the flesh and blood of the everyday to touch our hearts and become action.

Last week, blind Bartimaeus refused to remain silent and invisible by Jesus' 'gate-keepers'. It was by raising his voice and being heard that he discovered his dignity. People then, as today, often try to render such people invisible or silence them. Those disciples who had benefitted from Jesus' presence and teaching continued, as do many today, to be blind to his priorities. They wanted to send a hungry crowd home. They did not want to let children come to Jesus because they had no standing in society. They wanted to shut Bartimaeus up and make him go away. They failed to see that Jesus came to serve and not be served. Today, many fail to see discipleship as following the nonviolent Jesus and are as the American poet and critic, Wendell Berry said, '*..... just as likely as anyone else to join the military-industrial conspiracy to murder Creation*'. More and more we hear about national security and border security; the so-called 'war on terror'; the 'flag' and a false 'patriotism' enlisted when people genuinely criticise the harm one's country does; 'values' that have little bearing in our lives except to serve those in privileged positions of power. The government plays the media like a piano to promote its agenda whilst churches are often silent about the current health crisis, the coup in Burma (Myanmar is a dirty

word), the threats posed to the countries in the South China sea as our government treats a major trading partner as an adversary, or enemy. The call to love God and neighbour cannot be separated from loving all creation, even says 'a speck of dust' as Pope Francis says because God is present in all. This God does not collaborate with the military leader, the banker or financier who enriches himself at the price of ordinary people. This God is suffering with people on the underbelly of society.

Pope Francis is not always won approval by people in power for reminding us all that our sisters and brothers who have faces, stories, histories – which require love and support. This is where the rubber hits the road. Abundant life, our liberation and salvation, depends more on our relationships than on religious rites: *'I was hungry and they fed me.....'* We can rationalise these passages to suit ourselves as much as we like, but we cannot get away from the pull they have on us as human beings and as followers of Jesus. When Jesus tells the lawyer that he is not far from the reign of God, he implies that knowing the commandments is not enough. We must live them each day. It is about seeing our lives as bound up with the other – both our sisters and brothers and God's creation – and find our loving God at the heart of all things.

The neighbour is not just the one who has the same values that we hold, or speaks the same language as us, who dresses as we do. Fyodor Dostoyevsky in ***The Brothers Karamazov*** writes: *'Love people even in their sin, for this is the semblance of Divine Love and is the highest love on earth. Love all God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of god's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things.... And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love.'* Our neighbors are also those whom we may never meet: the trafficked person, the asylum seeker, the people of Pacific Island nations threatened by climate change, the colonised Indigenous people from the Amazon, our own country and around the world. Neighbour takes on a new meaning, in the geo-political sense, as we approach the Glasgow Climate Summit in November. We find that as we grow more sensitive and attentive to the other, we discover our connectedness and our shared humanity; more mindful of the consequences of our choices and actions vis-à-vis neighbour and all creation.

Those in politics, the media and the church seem to want ordinary people to leave their brains at home. The political system, corporations and some parts of the church want to determine what we think. No transparency! No discussion! No listening! No understanding! They dangerously claim to know the mind of God. But, in many places this God must die. We have seen this in attacks on churches, mosques and synagogues. These attacks occur in such places because there are people within them who serve and invoke the God of peace and justice and liberation; because they take seriously the God of liberation. And, this God must die in people like Martin Luther King, Oscar Romero, the murdered missionaries in El Salvador as well as the Jesuits at the university, or even Thomas Sankaras.

At the recent **4th World Meeting of Popular Movements**, Pope Francis addressing those present said, *'Seeing you reminds me that we are not condemned to repeat or to build a future based on exclusion and inequality, rejection or indifference; where the culture of privilege is an invisible and insurmountable power; and where being exploited and abused are common methods of survival.'* He continued saying, *'We have all suffered the pain of lockdown, but as usual you have had the worst of it. In neighbourhoods without basic infrastructure, where many of you and millions and millions more people live, it is difficult to stay at home, not only because you do not have everything you need to ensure minimum care and protection measures, but also because your home is the neighbourhood. Migrants, undocumented persons, informal workers without a fixed income were deprived, in many cases, of any state aid and*

prevented from carrying out their usual tasks, thus exacerbating their already grinding poverty. One of the expressions of this culture of indifference is that this suffering one-third of our world does not seem to be of sufficient interest to the big media and opinion makers. It remains huddled together and hidden.'

Pope Francis concluded very concretely, *'In the name of God, I ask financial groups and international credit institutions to allow poor countries to assure "the basic needs of their people" and to cancel those debts that so often are contracted against the interests of those same peoples. In the name of God, I ask the great extractive industries.....to stop destroying forests, wetlands and mountains, to stop polluting rivers and seas, to stop poisoning food and people. In the name of God, I ask the great food corporations to stop imposing monopolistic systems of production and distribution that inflate prices and end up withholding bread from the hungry. In the name of God, I ask arms manufacturers and dealers to completely stop their activity, because it foments violence and war, it contributes to those awful geopolitical games which cost millions of lives displaced and millions dead. In the name of God, I ask the technology giants to stop exploiting human weakness, people's vulnerability, for the sake of profits without caring about the spread of hate speech, grooming, fake news, conspiracy theories, and political manipulation. In the name of God, I ask the telecommunications giants to ease access to educational material and connectivity for teachers via the internet so that poor children can be educated even under quarantine. In the name of God, I ask the media to stop the logic of post-truth, disinformation, defamation, slander and the unhealthy attraction to dirt and scandal, and to contribute to human fraternity and empathy with those who are most deeply damaged. In the name of God, I call on powerful countries to stop aggression, blockades and unilateral sanctions against any country anywhere on earth. No to neo-colonialism. Conflicts must be resolved in multilateral fora such as the United Nations. We have already seen how unilateral interventions, invasions and occupations end up; even if they are justified by noble motives and fine words.'*



Love versus Scripture. David Hayward *The Naked Pastor* October 25, 2018

General Intercessions

Introduction: We pray to the God of love and kindness who draws near to all people as neighbours. We pray in response: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***

- We remember our neighbours in West Papua, Afghanistan, Burma, the Philippines and other places of conflict: may we seek to respect and help one another and build peace and progress on the basis of justice and equitable sharing, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***
- We remember our neighbours in West Papua continue to suffer oppression: may we listen to them and recognise their desire to establish a 'land of peace' and may we not turn a blind eye to the ongoing violence and suffering, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***
- We remember our neighbours in places affected by the climate change - the Pacific Island States and Indian Ocean Island States: may all these people receive the support, encouragement and assistance they require and may we strive to act mindfully to respect and protect our environment, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***
- We remember our neighbour in the young: that we together as a nation seek to make specific and concrete commitments to the young and vulnerable ones where they feel included in society and communities and find respect by those in authority, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***
- We remember our neighbours around the globe who suffer illness, illiteracy and other forms of poverty: may we continue to demand from our leaders a human response to the needs of others and speak out to defend the rights of the poor and the needy, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***
- We remember our neighbours who are sick, especially those living with terminal illness: that we are mindful of the psychological and sometimes physical isolation they feel and seek to be a loving and compassionate presence to them, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***
- We remember our neighbours who at great risk have the courage to speak truth to power: may those in the media, medical profession, arts world and ordinary citizens find consolation in the realisation that their humanity is bound up with people whose rights are being ignored and violated, let us pray: ***Make us instruments of your peace and love.***

Concluding Prayer: God of love and kindness, listen our prayers and help us through your loving Spirit give to your love a human shape by our engagement with one another.

Prayer over the Gifts

God of loving kindness,
in these offerings of bread and wine
we join with Jesus, your Son
in his self-offering of love for the world.
May we respond to you love
and seek to bring life to our brothers and sisters.

Prayer after Communion

God of loving kindness,
in our sharing in the mystery of the breaking of the bread
and the blood of Jesus,
may we be joined more closely to his heart
and be in the world
people that reflect his heart and love for all people.

Notices

November 4 *Day of Prayer for Anglican-Roman Catholic Reconciliation*

November 5 *World Tsunami Awareness Day*

November 6 *International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict*

November 9 *Opening of the Berlin Wall in 1989*

Further Resources

'Jesus summarised all the teachings as 'Love God and love your neighbor.' Our neighbour, we know, isn't just found in our family, workplace, or apartment. It's the kid flashing gang signs, the smelly homeless man who lives in the park, the transgender prostitute who works the downtown corner, the crazy old woman who lives alone outside of town, and the immigrant family that doesn't speak English. Jesus gives us the strength of God's love so that we can learn to be allies with those whom society has pushed to the margins.'

Rose Marie Berger, excerpt from *The Revolution: A Field Manual for Changing Your World*

The most shocking fact about war is that its victims and its instruments are individual human beings, and that these individual beings are condemned by the monstrous conventions of politics to murder or be murdered in quarrels not their own.

Aldous Huxley, 1894-1963

The natural state of man(sic) is not war, as Dick Cheney thinks ~ the natural state of (man) is social cooperation and altruism but only if we make a stand for those values of the soul.

Allen L Roland

"Don't turn your face away.

Once you've seen, you can no longer act like you don't know.

Open your eyes to the truth. It's all around you.

Don't deny what the eyes to your soul have revealed to you.

Now that you know, you cannot feign ignorance.

Now that you're aware of the problem, you cannot pretend you don't care.

To be concerned is to be human.

To act is to care."

Vashti Quiroz-Vega

The first time it was reported that our friends were being butchered there was a cry of horror. Then a hundred were butchered. But when a thousand were butchered and there was no end to the butchery, a blanket of silence spread. When evil doing comes like falling rain, nobody calls out 'stop!' When crimes begin to pile up they become invisible. When sufferings become unendurable, the cries are no longer heard. The cries, too, fall like rain in summer.

Bertolt Brecht

Where is the justice of political power if it executes the murderer and jails the plunderer, and then itself marches upon neighbouring lands, killing thousands and pillaging the very hills?

Kahlil Gibran

What the mind doesn't understand, it worships or fears.

Alice Walker

You are not entitled to your opinion. You are entitled to your informed opinion. No one is entitled to be ignorant.

Harlan Ellison

An error does not become truth by reason of multiplied propagation, nor does truth become error because nobody sees it.

Mohandas Gandhi

A writer is a person who cares what words mean, what they say, how they say it. Writers know words are their way towards truth and freedom, and so they use them with care, with thought, with fear, with delight. By using words well they strengthen their souls. Story-tellers and poets spend their lives learning that skill and art of using words well. And their words make the souls of their readers stronger, brighter, deeper.”

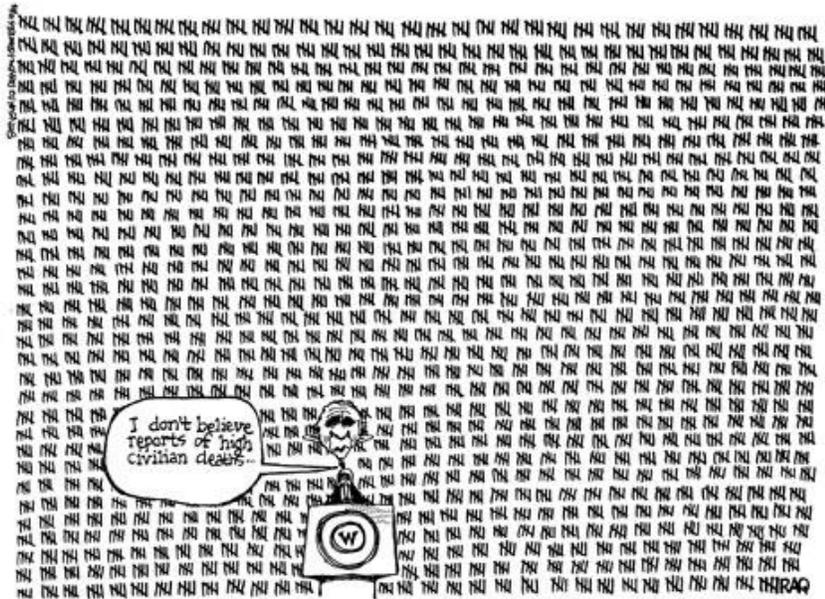
Ursula K. Le Guin

Some days I am not sure if my faith is riddled with doubt, or whether, graciously, my doubt is riddled with faith. And yet I continue to live in a world the way a religious person lives in the world; I keep living in a world that I know to be enchanted, and not left alone. I doubt; I am uncertain; I am restless, prone to wander. And yet glimmers of holy keep interrupting my gaze.”

Lauren Winner

In the democracy of the dead all [people] at last are equal. There is neither rank nor station nor prerogative in the republic of the grave.

John James Inga



How many does it take to transmute wickedness into righteousness? One man must not kill. If he does, it is murder.... But a state or nation may kill as many as they please, and it is not murder. It is

just, necessary, commendable, and right. Only get enough people to agree to it, and the butchery of myriads of human beings is perfectly innocent. But how many does it take?

Adin Ballou, *The Non-Resistant*, February 5, 1845

The true hypocrite is the one who ceases to perceive his *deception*, the one who lies with sincerity

André Gide

Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.

Frederick Douglass

To bereave a man of life, or by violence to confiscate his estate, without accusation or trial, would be so gross and notorious an act of despotism, as must at once convey the alarm of tyranny throughout the whole nation; but confinement of the person, by secretly hurrying him to jail, where his sufferings are unknown or forgotten, is a less public, a less striking, and therefore a more dangerous engine of arbitrary government.

Alexander Hamilton

The worst sin toward our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that's the essence of inhumanity.

George Bernard Shaw

There is an evil which most of condone (support) and are even guilty of: indifference to evil. We remain neutral (impartial), and not easily moved by the wrongs done to other people

Abraham Joshua Heschel

The question about Auschwitz (the Holocaust) to be asked I not, '*Where was god?*' But rather, '*Where was man?*'

Abraham Joshua Heschel

St. John Chrysostom on the Poor from St John Chrysostom's meditations on the Gospel of Matthew

Would you honour the body of Christ? Do not despise his nakedness; do not honour him here in church clothed in silk vestments and then pass him by unclothed and frozen outside. Remember that he who said, '*This is my Body*', and made good his words, also said, '*You saw me hungry and gave me no food*', and, '*in so far as you did it not to one of these, you did it not to me*'. In the first sense the body of Christ does not need clothing but worship from a pure heart. In the second sense it does need clothing and all the care we can give it.

We must learn to be discerning Christians and to honor Christ in the way in which he wants to be honored. It is only right that honor given to anyone should take the form most acceptable to the recipient not to the giver. Peter thought he was honoring the Lord when he tried to stop him washing his feet, but this was far from being genuine homage. So give God the honor he asks for, that is give your money generously to the poor. God has no need of golden vessels but of golden hearts.

I am not saying you should not give golden altar vessels and so on, but I am insisting that nothing can take the place of almsgiving. The Lord will not refuse to accept the first kind of gift but he prefers the second, and quite naturally, because in the first case only the donor benefits, in the second case the poor gets the benefit. The gift of a chalice may be ostentatious; almsgiving is pure benevolence.

What is the use of loading Christ's table with gold cups while he himself is starving? Feed the hungry and then if you have any money left over, spend it on the altar table. Will you make a cup of gold and without a cup of water? What use is it to adorn the altar with cloth of gold hangings and deny Christ a coat for his back! What would that profit you? Tell me: if you saw someone starving and refused to give him any food but instead spent your money on adorning the altar with gold, would he thank you? Would he not rather be outraged? Or if you saw someone in rags and stiff with cold and then did not give him clothing but set up golden columns in his honour, would he not say that he was being made a fool of and insulted?

Consider that Christ is that tramp who comes in need of a night's lodging. You turn him away and then start laying rugs on the floor, draping the walls, hanging lamps on silver chains on the columns. Meanwhile the tramp is locked up in prison and you never give him a glance. Well again I am not condemning munificence in these matters. Make your house beautiful by all means but also look after the poor, or rather look after the poor first. No one was ever condemned for not adorning his house, but those who neglect the poor were threatened with hellfire for all eternity and a life of torment with devils. Adorn your house if you will, but do not forget your brother in distress. He is a temple of infinitely greater value.

I sought God and God I did not see.
I sought my soul but it eluded me.
I sought my neighbour and found all three.
Old Adage [altered for gender sensitivity]

One of the nicest things that can happen to a person is to do good by stealth and be found out by accident.

Mark Twain

The trouble is that when American dollars earn only six percent over here, they get restless and go overseas to get 100 percent. The flag follows the dollar and the soldiers follow the flag.

I wouldn't go to war again as I have done to defend some lousy investment of the bankers. We should fight only for the defense of our home and the Bill of Rights. War for any other reason is simply a racket.

There isn't a trick in the racketeering bag that the military gang is blind to. It had its 'finger men' to point out enemies, its 'muscle men' to destroy enemies, its 'brain men' to plan war preparations and a 'Big Boss' - supernaturalistic capitalism.

I spent 33 years in the Marines. Most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism. I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers in 1909-1912. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenue in. I helped in the rape of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. War is a racket.

General Smedley D. Butler

Always question your fear, Anh. there's almost never a good reason to be scared.

Anh Do *The Happiest Refugee: A Memoir*

And don't kid yourself; when you don't decide, that's a decision.

Anh Do *The Happiest Refugee: A Memoir*

There's only two times in life, there's now and there's too late

Anh Do

Give it a crack and see what happens. And if you fail... celebrate, because at least you know you're sailing near the edge of your capacity!`

Anh Do

And we were saved on the fifth day by a big German merchant ship which took us to a refugee camp in Malaysia, and we were there for around three months before Australia says - come to Australia. And we're very glad that happened. So often, we heard Mum and Dad say - what a great country. How good is this place? And the other thing - kids, as you grow up, do as much as you can to give back to this great country and to give back to others less fortunate. And so, that's how Mum and Dad taught us to fit in.

Anh Do, *The Happiest Refugee*



Nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion.

G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*

...whoever closes his eyes to the past
becomes blind to the present.

Whoever does not wish to remember inhumanity

becomes susceptible to the dangers of new infection.'

Richard Von Weizaecher, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany