

A NEW VOICE

EREA NATIONAL RITUAL OF APOLOGY

THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM CANBERRA
JUNE 1 2017



WHY WE ARE HERE

The Feast of Pentecost is approaching. As it draws near, in the same way as Jesus' followers gathered in an upper room, we gather as an Edmund Rice community, prompted by the Spirit, in the upper reaches of our nation's capital, to proclaim a message of regret, lament and contrition – to say that we are sorry.

In his Pentecost Homily in 2016, Pope Francis stated: "The Spirit is given to us by God and leads us back to the God. The entire work of salvation is one of "re-generation". On this unique site of devastation and regeneration, the National Arboretum, we gather in brokenness to re-imagine a liberated future, where not a single life remains abandoned, where every life, however broken, is lifted up.

This morning, Edmund Rice Education Australia will acknowledge and apologise for the suffering of victims and survivors of sexual abuse by Christian Brothers, clergy and lay staff in our schools – abuse that has been reported and abuse that remains hidden. Because our schools are places where this abuse has occurred, it is right that we join together in solidarity with one another to take this action.

Today, we are in the privileged presence of survivors of abuse. It is our hope that the apology we will deliver demonstrates that we have listened to you – that we have sought to understand your pain, and that the essence of your views, thoughts and feelings are captured in our words, actions and symbols. It is our hope that today will be an important step in addressing a longstanding omission and healing pain which is unfathomable. Today we embark on a long journey to re-establishing trust: trust that can only be truly earned through action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We are honoured to be on the ancestral lands of the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge the First Australians as the traditional custodians of the continent, whose cultures are among the oldest living cultures in human history. We pay respect to the elders of the community and extend our recognition to their descendants who are present.

WELCOME TO THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA-GOULBURN

EREA appreciates the support of Archbishop Christopher Prowse and the diocesan community for its support of the National Apology.

The symbols of our gathering today are seven candles which represent the fire of Pentecost as well as the seven Gifts of the Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Right Judgement, Courage, Knowledge, Reverence and Wonder. Our students from St Edmund's College represent all students across our schools. Together, from our upper room, let us listen to our stories of faith:

LITURGY OF THE WORD

All: Lord, send out your spirit and renew the face of the earth!

Acts 2:1-11

Marie Barton

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

All: Lord, send out your spirit and renew the face of the earth!

John 20: 19-23

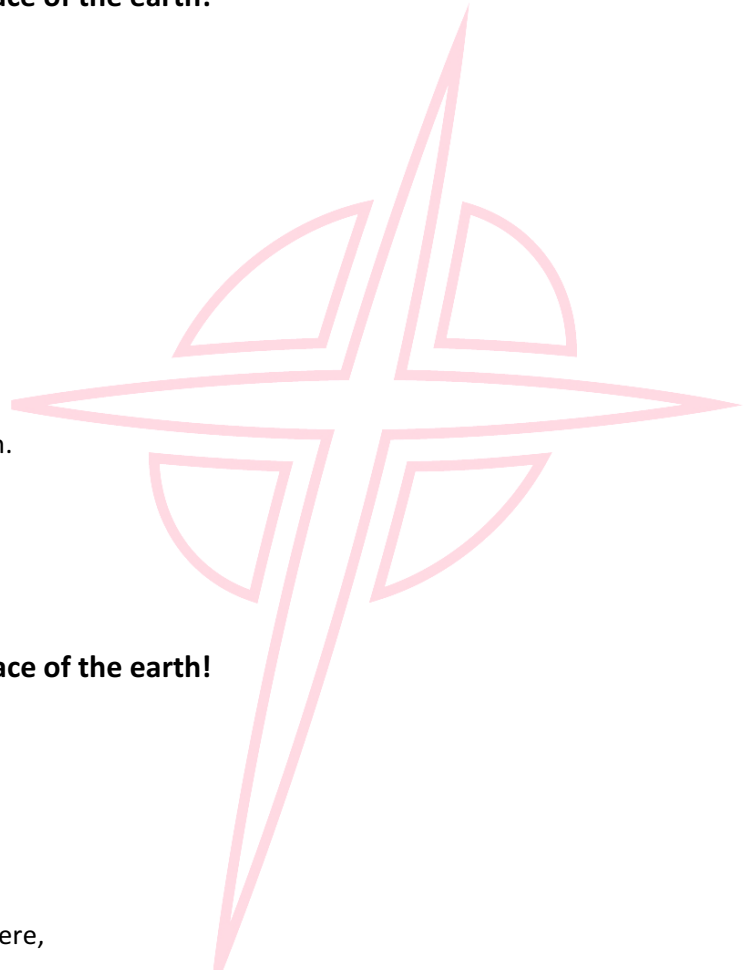
Peter McGovern

On the evening of that first day of the week,
when the doors were locked, where the disciples were,
Jesus came and stood in their midst
and said to them, "Peace be with you."
When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.
Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you.
As the Father has sent me, so I send you."
And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them,
"Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them,
and whose sins you retain are retained."

All: Lord, send out your spirit and renew the face of the earth

REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

John Crowley



On February 13 2008, the Australian Government delivered an Apology to Aboriginal Australians, with particular reference to the Stolen Generation. It was a long overdue statement of acknowledgement and regret. In this context let us listen to Wayne as he speaks on our behalf in relation to our Apology to Victims of Sexual Abuse.

THE APOLOGY

Wayne Tinsey

In this time of Pentecost – a time when the spirit provides us with the courage to find a new voice - we, the leaders of Edmund Rice Education Australia, on behalf of our communities offer the following apology. Today we begin a journey of major change by publicly acknowledging the sexual abuse of students in our schools; some dead, some alive, some unknown:

Today we directly acknowledge the **scarring harm** of sexual abuse as abhorrent, sinful, shameful and disgraceful; and we also acknowledge that whatever was done can never be undone. **For this we apologise.....**

Today we directly acknowledge the **helplessness, powerlessness, fear, guilt and shame** that has been, and remains part of a victim's life when, as a child, they recall feeling no control over their lives and even blamed themselves for what had been done to them. **For this we apologise.....**

Today we directly acknowledge the fact that young people in our schools were **betrayed** in their adolescence where they had every expectation of, and needed nurturing and protection. **For this we apologise.....**

Today we directly acknowledge the **anger** which our young students have felt, have shown and may still harbour against their abusers and others who they feel failed to protect them. **For this we apologise....**

Today we directly acknowledge the **sadness, grief and sense of loss felt by victims**, especially when the perpetrator was loved and trusted by our young people and their families. **For this we apologise....**

Today we directly acknowledge the **alarming statistics** of serial sexual abuse, assault and molestation of young people in our schools by Christian Brothers, Clergy and lay staff - **For this we apologise....**

Today we directly acknowledge that the pain inflicted and suffered continues to have **ongoing devastation** on victims in their adulthood as partners, parents, extended family and leaders in their careers and communities – and that there is no hiding this pain - **For this we apologise....**

Today we directly acknowledge the unimaginable **pain endured by families, friends and loved ones** who have been broken by the ingrained lasting trauma, often hidden, of each and every unspeakable criminal indignity and personal violation - **For this we apologise....**

And finally, most significantly, today is the day we directly acknowledge that there has been a history of **denial, secrecy, suppression and diminution** in relation to sexual abuse crimes. Barriers have been placed which have hindered redress. Victims have not had a real voice. Rightful acknowledgment has not been given to those crying for justice. We have not spoken or acted as Edmund Rice and the Gospels would have demanded - **For this we apologise....**

In the knowledge that, to many, the offering of an apology at this time may seem unhelpful, even possibly adding to the pain in some cases, we offer it sincerely in the hope that it is seen as a significant and necessary step towards healing, reconciliation and ongoing redress. In the true spirit of Pentecost, we pray that Edmund Rice Education Australia has found a new voice in laying stronger foundations for support, re-connection, inclusion and ongoing care for all who have suffered in this way.

I am sorry. We are sorry. We commit to a liberated future.

EREA resolves to find a new voice which proclaims respect, fairness, justice and inclusion for the survivors and victims of sexual abuse. Let us join in a new prayer written for this day. The prayer, **New Voices**, reflects the structure of Jesus' ultimate prayer of inclusion, the Beatitudes, and the generative, pleading proclamation of Pentecost, the Sequence:

NEW VOICES

(Ray Paxton 2017)

Blest are the eyes seeking light in the darkness....
Blest are the ears who respond to their cry....
Blest are the prophets who question God's presence....
Blest are the answers which generate life...
Blest are the minds which inspire us to justice....
Blest are the arms giving comforting grace
Blest are the hearts fighting structures that silence....
Blest are our voices resounding in space:

*Listen, all who hear - the time has come to pass
When the last shall be first and the first shall be last.
A newer age will dawn; the signs of change are here.
The curtain has been torn; we need not live in fear...*

*Open our eyes, Lord, and help us to see.
Unbind our hearts so your people are free.
Called by the Spirit you faithfully send -
Goodness will flourish! Injustice will end!
We are the voice crying 'Never Again!'
Wake us and heal us, Creator and Friend!*



SIGN OF PEACE

Today's Gospel says: "Jesus stood in their midst and said 'Peace be with you!'". Let us offer each other a Sign of Peace.

THE CANDLES

Today's Gospel also says: "As the Father sent me, so I send you". Four of the seven candles will journey to each of our four EREA Regions so that they may carry this light to their local Apologies. The remaining three will go to the EREA National Office, the Oceania Province and the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn.

REFLECTIVE WALK

Let us move forward into this great site of regeneration and healing and reflect on our words, actions and resolve.

Setting Out for Home

A NATIONAL GATHERING FOR SUSTAINABILITY AT EREA
CANBERRA 2017




EDMUND RICE EDUCATION
AUSTRALIA
Sustainability
AT EREA