



Not from the Pulpit: Fr. Michael Stoney SJ



St Ignatius Loyola was an unashamed seeker of perfection. This was not a triumphalist or self-absorbed attitude, but a grateful acknowledgement of God's goodness in providing us with so many gifts. Surely, the only logical response was to use our talents unselfishly in creating the best possible world.

So, Jesus' relentless opposition to evil shown in this Sunday's Gospel story of his healing of the man possessed by an unclean spirit invites us to aim at a powerful determination to oppose the many 'unclean spirits' that scar our world today. Obsession with wealth, for example, that allows the few to enjoy God's world and condemns so many to needless poverty; a bullying spirit that disrespects others through racist or sexist attitudes; blindness to the sufferings of the 'have-nots'

of our world: no shortage of 'unclean spirits' today.

Our Ignatian parish as we enter 2018: surely we need Ignatius' pursuit of perfection to inspire us to grapple with such 'unclean spirits' as tenaciously and uncompromisingly as we can. Let us commit ourselves to make this year one of outstanding spiritual energy as we walk with Jesus. 'He gives orders even to the unclean spirits and they obey him!'

Parish Notices

Parish Masses on Australia Day

Please note there will be no 12.10pm Mass on Friday 26 Jan @ St Francis Xavier. The 7.00am Mass at SFX and the 5.30pm Mass at STM will be celebrated as usual.

Dinner Invitation - Harbourside North Catenians

Thurs 8 Feb @ 8.00pm - Mosman Community and Art Centre

HNC invite men of the Parish to be guests at their upcoming dinner.

Catenians are a Catholic laymen's association that meets monthly in the spirit of our shared faith and friendship. Anyone interested please contact Peter Walden on 0448.474.629 or peterchona@gmail.com

Parish Finance Committee

Due to a retirement, Fr Andy is seeking a new member for the Parish Finance Committee. Requirements are commercial or financial experience from any background. Commitment is four meetings per year of an evening plus occasional other advisory activity. Please send a brief resume to olw@northsydney Catholics.com

Sunday's Readings

First Reading

[Dt 18:15-20](#)

The Lord will raise up a prophet like Moses.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 94:1-2, 6-9, R. v.9](#)

If today, you hear his voice,

harden not your hearts

Second Reading

[1 Cor 7:32-35](#)

Devote yourself to the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation

[Mt 4:16](#)

Gospel

[Mk 1:21-28](#)

Jesus commands an unclean spirit.

In Our Prayers

Baptisms

Hamilton Healey-Saul, Zion Sullivan-Njemanze, Naresh Arulanantham, Yuto Sumibo, Mila Jezercic

Weddings

Alanna Hudson & Jonati Baleitamana

Sick

Ron Whitmore, Sr Natalina Todeschini, Brian McClosky, Craig Chase, Rosa Maria Santos, Vedran Simunovic, Bruce Horsfield, Tony Breslin, Gavin O'Connor, Fr Tony Smith SJ, Sharon Collins, John Fitzgerald, Sandra Tsui, Neave Mackey (17yrs), Mary O'Connor, Sister Anna Ventura rsm, Domenico Cioffi

Recently Deceased

Nancye Delaney, Gwen O'Riordan, Mee-Na Cheok, Jack McCaffery, Patrick Rodgers (Riverview)

Josephine Nixon, John Buckmaster, Janice Breslin, Christine Maher, Bill Wall, Peter Cornish (Launceston), Gregory Desmond Strangward Adcock, Angela Ryan, Joan Saunders,

Anniversaries

Kevin Smith (Brother of Fr Cecil Smith SJ)

The Morality of National Symbols

Richard Leonard SJ

We often hear the phrase: “if ain’t broke, done fix it”, but it seems that many of our Australian national symbols are, at very least, under pressure, if not broken, and need fixing. Indeed I am unaware of any other country, including New Zealand, where our national symbols do not perform their function in the way they should. National symbols are meant to unify the vast majority of citizens around shared expressions of national identity.

Having our Head of State live 17,000kms away doesn’t unite everyone. Having the Union Jack in the corner of our flag doesn’t either; many Australians don’t know the words to our national anthem and most don’t know that we have two anthems – one for when the Queen or her representatives are present (God Save the Queen), and one when they’re not. But every time Australia Day comes around what divides us is more potent than what unities us.

Don’t get me wrong, while tragically conceding that every single colonial power was the kiss of death to local cultures, I have no problem whatsoever in celebrating 26th January 26 1788 when Arthur Philip entered Sydney Cove with 11 ships carrying 775 Irish and English convicts and 645 administrators, jailers, soldiers and their families and thereby founding the largest prison farm in the world.

I can easily give thanks that of all the colonial powers we could have had, I thank God we got the British because if they had a colony for long enough they left behind parliamentary democracy, an appropriate role for the military, an efficient and stable bureaucracy, a good system of education and a high standard of healthcare. We all know many other colonial powers like the Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italians, Belgians, Dutch, Germans and the Japanese, who while giving other great gifts from their culture to their colonies, did not leave behind the legacy the Brits did. So we have much for which to be truly grateful.

But every blessing is steeped in reality.

The colonialization of Australia, while bringing some wonderful benefits to all its inhabitants, has also bought a litany of disease, poverty, abduction, imprisonment, addiction and cultural dislocation to the first nations of this land. And that’s the rub with 26th January.

Other than as part of the culture wars, I cannot see why we as a nation will not find a day which would be more unifying. Because, God knows, Australia did not exist in 1788. Indeed, most Australians don’t even know from where the name comes and what it means: *terra australis incognita*, the unknown land of the south, was used by ancient peoples about a mythical world they posited beyond the horizon, but it was not applied to this place until 1804 when the British navigator Matthew Flinders proposed the name, Terra Australis, or Australia, for the whole continent.

When people say “we’ve always celebrated Australia Day on January 26”, it’s just not true. Not until 1935 did all the Australian states and territories use that name to mark that date, and it was not until 1994 that 26th January became a nationally observed public holiday across the country.

I wonder whether a few other dates would unite us more:

- 1st January when the Commonwealth of Australia actually came into existence in 1901;
- 9th July when Queen Victoria signed the Act of Federation into law; and, maybe most inclusively of all,
- 27th May when nearly 91% of white Australians voted to stop including our indigenous brothers and sisters under the Flora and Fauna Act, and grant them citizenship.

Understandably some of you could well be thinking, “I’ve haven’t come to Mass to hear about all of this”, but I think that judgement may miss the morality that should inform the way Catholics enter into dialogue, and even respectful disagreement, about all our national symbols. The best of our ethics, based on Jesus call for all of us to be one as he and Father are one, calls us to leave behind the ideology of the culture wars and give ground, where we can, so that days, things and people which are meant to embody this great country we love, make room for all our brothers and sisters.

May God give us courage for this task, a generosity of spirit and the grace to face up to our past, great and sinful as it is by turns, so we can be guided into our future with hope and grace.