

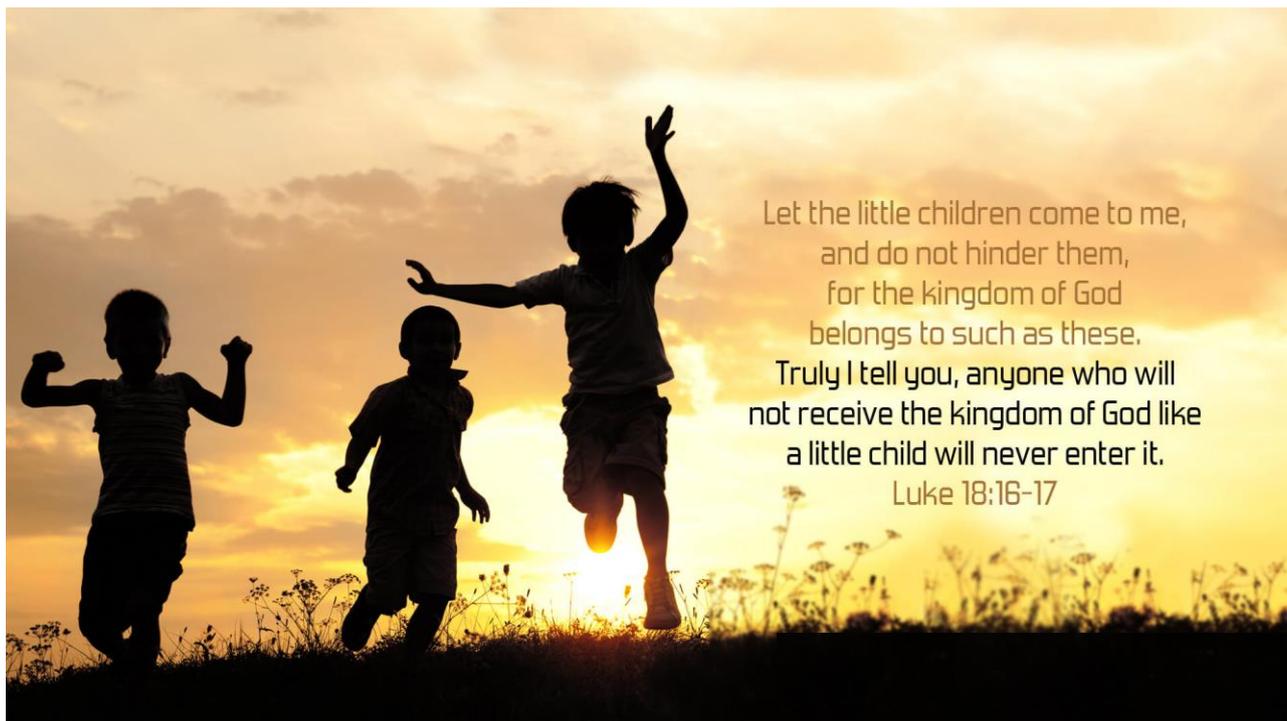
NEW SLIDE

Invocation

Most gracious Lord as we begin this devotion we first glorify you, as you are revealed to us through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

NEW SLIDE

Let the Children come to me



I want to share with you one of my favourite passages – which speaks volumes to me.

I am sure theologians near and afar would have a great messages drawn from this passage but for me when I read or hear this passage I'm reminded of many things about God's intended relationship with me....

Throughout the passages of scripture, time and again, I see that children are incredibly important to Jesus

The fact God chose to reveal himself and come to us as a baby, a child, is just one of these insights. Could it be that in this he was revealing how our relationship with him, was to be one of complete reliance, confidence and trust in him - for all we need ... as that of an infant who on their own can contribute **nothing towards** to their own survival.

When comprehensible speech starts to surface – the child will offer in all sincerity, as the rationale for their actions and thinking, echoing the words Because mum said so! How soon that innocence is lost!

As a grandparent I hold dear to my heart the squeals of excitement and joy my grandchildren used to give when I'd pick them up after kindy all else was forgotten - and breaking all ranks they'd run to me open arms -they were just so happy excited that I was there for them, someone familiar someone they knew without question, loved and cared for them ... without wanting something in return. Is this not the relationship that God desires of us – that of the innocence and excitement and with the absolute joy of a

child. I might add, now that they are older they still do the same thing – but I suspect it's also got something to do with what might be in my bag for them.



Whilst I am no expert on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional cultures – almost everything I have come across points to the fact that children to the community were sacred – they were an important part of the kinship system – they embodied the continuance of their culture and their peoples and it was important that they were nurtured and protected.

SLIDE CHANGE (Artwork print accessed from NAPCAN downloadable resources 2002 NAP116)

I want to share this artwork with you. This is the work of Tex Skuthorpe – who is a Noonghaburra man (Noonghaburra - North Western NSW)

This artwork entitled *Children are Sacred* - is about respect for children and the responsibility of adults to care for children in much the same way children were cared for in traditional communities.

Traditionally in his culture children and old people were the most important members of the community – the old people for what they had learnt throughout their life, and the children because they would carry on the law, the spirituality, the beliefs and the culture.

The role and responsibility of all other members of the community was to look after the older people and the children.

Early teaching and care for children was the primary responsibility of the parents (albeit in differing roles). Other family members and the community were also involved. The role of mum and dad was to ensure the child was loved. The disciplining often fell to other family and community members. Throughout the learning the child was encouraged to experiment and to experience their learning as deeply as possible.

Traditionally the teaching was delivered through engagement with the natural elements within their Country, through art, dance, stories and through watching the actions and behaviour of the adults in the community. All the time the child was asked to work out the message contained in what they were hearing and seeing as well as what they had learnt from the experience.

During the learning process the child **was allowed to make mistakes**. The adult's role was to teach the child what was right and wrong, **not to punish them** for being wrong. In fact, in traditional communities children were never afraid to be wrong because they knew they could trust their parents and other teachers in the community to keep them safe.

Under traditional law, the most disrespect was brought upon a community if a child was hurt and the punishment was severe for the person causing the hurt. As such children knew that their traditional law would protect them.

This artwork shows two adult spirits. The pink in their arms shows the sacred knowledge, which they were taught as children, now flowing into the child through the parent and community teachings.

(Pause)

The child is painted pink to show that children are sacred.

(Pause)

At the top of the artwork the central circle of symbols represents the Elders talking the knowledge out and sending the children out. The symbols either side show the children's journey into other communities where they were also taught and cared for.

(Pause)

Below the three figures in the middle are 5 circles representing different communities. These traditionally all had the same responsibilities as the child's own community. The brown dots represent people, the yellow represents fire, the pink dots represents children, the white represents yurrti (totem).

(Pause)

At the bottom the hands represent the child (small middle hand) who will carry on the knowledge which the parents / community (two larger hands on either side) have taught them. The larger hands either side shows the child is protected by the parents and other adult family and community members.

Today, realistically, not all children are able to experience this type of environment – traditional communities are very few and far between, but the importance of culture and the importance of children still remains a strong focus for many First Nations people.

SLIDE CHANGE



Tomorrow August 4, is recognised, in and amongst First Peoples communities, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. It is a mark of respect for, and the sacred nature of, Children.

Initially established in 1988, August 4 has been historically selected for this occasion to communally celebrate the birthdays of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were taken from their families at a young age, without knowing their birthday, their language or their culture.

The **theme** this year is **'We are the Elders of tomorrow, Hear our Voice'**. It honours the Elders – the custodians of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional knowledge, who continue to pass this knowledge down to their children through stories and cultural practice. This theme is about helping kids stand tall and feel connected and proud in culture.

Having a strong connection to culture helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children develop a strong sense of self and identity, a comprehensive education and an opportunity for a meaningful and engaged future. Hearing children's voices today plays a crucial role in them becoming influential Elders and leaders of the future.

Occasions such as National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day provides an opportunity for all Australians to show support to be mindful of the crucial impact that culture, loving family and protective community play in the life of every child, and particularly on this day, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Without these elements present in a child's life –their health, well-being and spiritual growth is greatly compromised.

NEW SLIDE

Let us pray

God our loving Creator and Father,

We grieve the time in our history when the impact of white settlement was so disastrous for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that very few children were born and even fewer survived.

We give thanks that the establishment of Christian missions in the past provided a safer—if regimented—environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents to conceive and raise children.

NEW SLIDE

We grieve

- the cooperation of Christians in the policy of separating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families in order that they might blend in to white Australian society, and that even then most people in white Australian society did not accept them as equals
- the trauma the family separation policy inflicted on both parents and children, and that the harmful legacy of this policy is still playing out generations later.

NEW SLIDE

We pray for well-designed initiatives to heal the damage to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and adults caused by past and present injustices. We pray for their success, and that where possible, we might contribute to that success.

We pray especially for present day Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in foster care, separated from their families because of welfare concerns. We pray that efforts to improve their **family situation will succeed, and that they can reunite with their parents.**

NEW SLIDE

We pray for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and girls from disadvantaged backgrounds who are or have been in touch with the juvenile justice system. We pray for initiatives designed to shift the trajectory of their lives onto a more positive path.

We pray for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and grandparents trying to raise their children so they can retain positive cultural knowledge and values while also succeeding in mainstream society.

NEW SLIDE

We pray for non-Aboriginal Christians that they will see the image of God in every person, not just in their own children or in people most superficially like themselves.

Lord we especially seek your Holy Spirit to grant to us all that child-like faith in you – so that we may continue to grow in our relationship with you as it is intended.

NEW SLIDE

Most gracious Father

You are known to us through this Land. You are revealed to us in its Peoples. Mountains bow down to you. Rivers run at your blessing.

We give thanks to you and we give thanks for those who have cared for this land from beyond time.

NEW SLIDE

We acknowledge and ask your ongoing blessing upon all, including the First Peoples, into whose hands you first gave knowledge and responsibility.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging, across this Land.

We seek a time of reconciliation and wholeness.

May your Holy Spirit guide and bless us in this journey.

In your name we pray. Amen



**Welcome
Devotion**

Monday 3 August, 2020

Most gracious Lord as we begin this devotion we first glorify you as you are revealed to us through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.





Let the little children come to me,
and do not hinder them,
for the kingdom of God
belongs to such as these.

Truly I tell you, anyone who will
not receive the kingdom of God like
a little child will never enter it.

Luke 18:16-17

Children are Sacred



*Tex Skuthorpe
Noonghaburra Tribe
[NAPCAN downloadable resources]*



NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
CHILDREN'S DAY
4 AUGUST 2020



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**HEAR OUR
VOICE**

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