

Faith and Culture Alive and Thriving in the Kimberley

It is always special to celebrate mass as a community in one language. It is wonderful when we do this with two – but on the feast of the nativity of John the Baptist mass was celebrated in six languages in the Kimberley community of Bidadanga. Members of Our Lady Queen of Peace Cathedral Parish in Broome travelled two hours to join the celebrations. *The little church came alive with prayer and praise. The community were so grateful that we could join them on this special occasion,* said Aunty Shirley Quaresmin. When asked about the 50 year anniversary (of Missa Kimberley in Bidadanga) Church leader Madeleine Jadai stated, *i feel very emotional. Bidadanga is one of the places where the Missa Kimberley started when we were kids. Our old people have been celebrating in this way for so long. It brings us together. Our way, our culture and our languages with the liturgy – they come together. Our Aboriginal spirituality comes together in the mass and it's very meaningful. This is how we get in touch with God and our old people. This mass helps us to grow strong in our faith. It helps us connect deep in our hearts.*

The theme for this year's NAIDOC Week is *'For Our Elders'*. Nothing could be more fitting than that the Diocese of Broome celebrate 50 years since the Missa Terra Spiritus Sancti (formerly Missa Kimberley) first became part of the Australian Church. It was standing room only in Broome's Cathedral as a special Aboriginal Sunday marking (take out) both the 50th anniversary of the Mass of the Land of the Holy Spirit and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday was celebrated.

Young and old, visitors and parishioners all came together to celebrate the mass in a special Kimberley way. *This was the best celebration we have had for a long time. Everybody was filled with a spirit of unity and hope,* Aunty Shirley Quaresmin noted. Aunty Shirley is a member of the Cathedral Parish Council and is Deputy Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC). The mass concluded with an acknowledgement of parishioner Liz Davie receiving the 2023 NATSICC Service to Community Award, as well as the blessing song for all elders present - Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous. One of the visitors who joined everybody for morning tea was Fr Kevin McKelson's niece Mary Malone. Fr McKelson, along with the people of Bidadanga, co-wrote the wording of the Missa Kimberley mass. Other locations across the Diocese, such as Halls Creek parish, similarly celebrated Aboriginal Sunday. This has been a great celebration of faith, culture and language throughout the Kimberley. The Holy Spirit in this land!!