

Editorial

In this issue we are pleased to be able to present a couple of papers from the Northern Territory: Sr Anne Gardiner fdnsc, OBE, and Teresita Puruntatameri from Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School (formerly St Therese's School), Nguiu, Bathurst Island. Their theme is localisation of Aboriginal education in the Territory: specifically, the adoption of a Tiwi style of leadership and organisation.

Fr Kevin McKelson sac continues his informative series of missiological autobiography. This time he reflects on the function of myth in the belief systems of Aboriginal people, and relates it to Christian faith.

Keren, the Nelen Yubu secretary, as is her wont, brings out of her store house new things and old.

I review a book by an African priest on the sacrament of Reconciliation. He is keen that the *social* character of the sacrament be recovered: this would relate it meaningfully to African culture — and, one might add, also to Aboriginal culture, as one of the dominant features of Aboriginal culture is the people's concern for relationships. In the most recent issue of *Catalyst* (26,1,1996: 46-54) there is an interesting discussion of the same aspect of Reconciliation in regard to Melpa tradition (Western Highlands, PNG) by a Melpa seminarian, Clement Papa.

We use once more the Bulletin Board feature that we introduced tentatively back in No. 36 (1988) and used some further eight times up to 1991. It could become a more stable feature if one of the items it presents this time becomes an established reality, namely the MSC Aboriginal Ministry Conference. It is interesting that the other item featured is a proposed forum for a wider group of people involved in ministry among Aboriginal people.

— Martin Wilson msc
Editor

GROUP LEADERSHIP TOWARDS ABORIGINALISATION OR LOCALISATION AT MURRUPURTIYANUWU

Teresita Puruntatameri

MILIMIKA commenced at Murrupurtiyanuwu when we realised that for a Tiwi person it is too difficult to stand alone in leadership.

Thus I, Teresita Puruntatameri, Principal in Training came up with the idea of a 'milimika group'. The word 'milimika' has two meanings in Tiwi:

1. A cleared ground made by families to sleep, eat, and talk when they are out bush.
2. A cleared ground made for ceremonies 'Pukamani' where Tiwi people 'Yoyi' dance inside the ring remembering the deceased person. Also in the 'Kurlama' ring only men perform singing as they walk around inside the circle.

The meaning that I took from Milimika is that school is like the ceremonial ring. Sometimes as a leader, I dance, sometimes as group leaders we dance. Our philosophy of the leadership role in the Milimika circle is that people work together as a group:

- group discussion
- listen to one another
- each have their say
- group decision-making on educational issues, e.g. Bilingual education and interviewing new Staff and, if it's a Tiwi person we ask the spouse to be present.

We perform different dances in the Milimika ring, sometimes in pairs or in a group. Our major ceremony at this stage is Discipline/Behaviour problems. If a teacher can't control a child's behaviour then s/he is sent to the office, then Zita and one of the Milimika persons in the same skin group talk to the child. We expect Non-Tiwi teachers to work closely with our Assistant teachers and we make sure that Tiwi children are given quality education not second-rate education.

Teresita Puruntatameri is Principal-in-Training at Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School, Bathurst Island, Northern Territory. Paper written 15 February 1996.

At Murrupurtiyanuwu now there is no Assistant Principal but rather in our ceremony ring there are five people. These five are Tiwi, dialoguing together at times, and at times with the whole staff. Each one of them has a class, yet each one of them has taken on further responsibility in the Milimika Circle.

Role of Milimika Group

Leah Kerinauia already is the Jirnani Co-ordinator and her added duty is to work with Zita, the Principal-in-Training on the strengthening of the teaching of the Tiwi language. Leah works closely on Language with Sr Jenny Kirby, our Teacher Linguist. Also she will work with Jacinta and Aurelia in the office for half an hour every Thursday, to become familiar with office procedure.

Ancilla Puruntatameri, who already as a Literacy worker works full time on Language maintenance and Art, will share her expertise in the Milimika group in the Language/Art area. Cilla will also work with Aurelia and Jacinta in the office for half an hour every Wednesday. In this way we hope that all members of Milimika group will eventually know the importance of what is going on in administration.

Carmelina Puantulura who is the daughter of the well known artist and culture expert Declan Apuatimi, will bring expertise to the group in both Culture and her vast knowledge and skill in story and song writing. She will also spend half an hour with Jacinta and Aurelia every Tuesday.

Elizabeth Kerinauia is the senior member of the Milimika and she is a Pre-school, Pwakayini teacher who has taken on responsibility to liaise with the parents on the happenings at school. We see this as a very important step in localisation.

We hope that dialoguing together in the Milimika circle and communicating our ideas to the whole staff, Murrupurtiyanuwu will grow in strength as a place for education. We sincerely thank Sr Trudy Keur, Assistant Director of C E O for her support and interest in our Milimika group leadership.

As time passes we know that we have much to give to our children, we also realise that we need support to really understand the many and varied issues relating to education, especially Aboriginal Education.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION — A REALITY IN THE 1990s

Anne Gardiner fdnsc

MY TOPIC today is Aboriginal Education — a reality in the 1990s. To be more specific I should say Tiwi education is a reality in the 1990s. For it is in the Tiwi context, that education has taken a giant step forward. This is because firstly, we are working together, not to Aboriginalise the school but rather to localise the school. Secondly, I have been challenged to 'let go' to move away from the dominant role as Principal i.e. non-Aboriginal, non-Tiwi principal. This challenge came as late as 31 May 1995, by our present Assistant Director of Catholic Education.

I feel to be true to my topic I need first of all to refer to three educationalists and their philosophies that have over the years been a springboard, a stamping ground for me. I refer to Paulo Freire, Martin Buber and Professor Hedley Beare.

In his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', Freire speaks of education as 'an act of depositing in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor.' This he states is, 'the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits.' In this concept of education knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing.

Against this banking concept of education Freire pleads to educators to abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with problem-posing/problem-solving by people in their relationship with the world.

He calls such education 'problem-posing' education. He sees Education problem-posing/problem-solving by people in their relationship with the world. He calls such education 'problem-

Sr Anne Gardiner FDNSC, OBE is the present Principal at Murrupurtiyanuwu school, Nguuu, Bathurst Island, Northern Territory.

posing' education. He sees Education as the practice of freedom — as opposed to education as the practice of domination. Freire helped the oppressed to see the world not as a static *reality* but as a *reality* in process, in transformation. I will refer later to this point.

Freire's three foundation philosophical assumptions upon which his approach to education is grounded are:

1. Humanisation is the basic calling
2. People are capable of changing their world
3. Education, as an act of knowing, is never neutral. It always has a political consequence.

Tonight I will dwell on Freire's second assumption viz. 'People are capable of changing their world and we are capable of coming to a critical consciousness of our *reality* to the point where we can act to change it.' This is the *reality* of Aboriginal education in the 90s and I will treat this later in my paper.

Martin Buber lived from 1878 to 1965. He was a Jewish writer and philosopher. In his book *Education between Man and Man* the point that struck me was when he stated, 'across the whole extent of the planet new human beings are born who are characterised already and yet have still to be characterised — this is a myriad of realities, but also one reality. The child, not just the individual child, individual children, but the *child* is certainly a *reality*. Therefore as the child is a *reality* then education must become a *reality*. One step further at this point, Aboriginal education must become a *reality*.'

Buber's thinking on education is profoundly beautiful, deeply human and his understanding that 'education is ultimately shaped out of inclusiveness, reverence, grace of being, friendship and humility', is one I believe to be treasured, to be inspired by and to return to over and over. I can say this because I see this same inclusiveness, reverence, grace of being, friendship and humility evident in the Tiwi people as a whole, and this stands out in stark comparison to the competitiveness of the western world.

In his paper, Professor Hedley Beare, our First Secretary of the Northern Territory Education Department and now Professor of Education at the University of Melbourne, has something similar to say. I quote from his paper, 'The Curriculum for the 1990s — A

new Package or a New Spirit.' Beare states, 'I have tried to suggest that perhaps there is too much curricular 'theology' around at the moment. We are too rationalistic, too earnest in our planning, too mechanistic, too deadly serious. We would ennoble our younger generation and ensure their future more adequately, I think, if we reinstated compassion, responsibility, and respect for the incredible oneness of the cosmos, if we valued gaiety, playfulness and an organic connectedness in our education.'

Now with the thoughts of these three educationalists I venture to look at Aboriginal Tiwi Education in the '90s as a *reality*, that is to say, I feel it has come of age and there is no turning back. We have offered many 'new' packages as Hedley Beare rightly stated. Some were good, others meant nothing to the children we strove to educate, because we imposed rather than questioned and listened. I agree what we need in Aboriginal Education is a new *spirit*. Yet if we are the educators we claim to be, we only have to look at what is uppermost in the life of our Aboriginal people, viz, the 'spirit'. In 'Tiwi' way the 'spirit' or Yiminga as the Tiwi call it means life, spirit, breath pulse. In other words it is the line of life. Perhaps we have bypassed the very core of all Aboriginal education viz. the right to be the people God created them to be. We have our Freires and Bubers in the NT. We have had people of the educational calibre, such as Beth Grahma, Sr Teresa Ward, Fran Murray, Stephen Harris, all pleading with us to allow education to be owned by Aboriginal people. It is only now that this *reality* has begun to take its rightful place in our educational world.

And what does this mean? It means that we move from a telling to a listening phase, not only listening but hearing and heeding. In an effort to see therefore what this listening might be calling us to in the Aboriginal context we must proceed with caution conscious of the wide group of people we would need to involve if we are to begin to understand from their point of view, the way we would need to lead, the way we would need to follow. We would need to recognise the *reality* that Aboriginal people never act as 'leader' as in the mainstream way of being a leader. Leadership with a Tiwi viewpoint is group leadership. We need to give time for them to

develop their style of leadership which will hopefully not be a copy of our culture's climbing the professional ladder. Family education meets families where they are, viz. in their spirit, not where we educational leaders wish they were. Each family system (skin-group/spirit) has a way of organising and integrating these areas and only the person and the system can tell one another where they are and what they need. This means for us in the 90s to look at learning and therefore education for learning, in a different way from that which has been utilised in western technological society in the past. Here in the *spirit* is the *reality*.

I mentioned the phrase family education, for until we can get the parents and extended family to own education, I feel that education 'for what' will never come to fruition amongst Aboriginal people. Education will remain a 'school based' task rather than a family task. For the very seed of learning is implanted deeply in Aboriginal people, for as I see it, the most powerful learning influence in the early life of the child is the relationship he or she bears towards those around him/her.

Furthermore, if these questions are to be answered there has to be dialogue. As Paulo Freire states, 'Everyone has different perspectives based on their own experiences.' In order to solve problems, people need to engage in a dialogue to acknowledge the other person's perspective and find some common ground. Dialogue, rather than argument accepts the validity of another point of view.

It is this validity of another point of view that urged me to choose the topic 'Aboriginal Education—a *Reality* for the 1990s'. We all realise that Education should have as one of its main tasks to invite people to believe in themselves.

I am speaking of my own involvement in Aboriginal Education. For many years I worked for and believed in the banking concept of education. I failed many times to invite people to believe in themselves. And it is here that with Freire and Buber I have come to believe in the philosophy of Hedley Beare. He writes, 'There was once an American sociologist who told a Shinto priest that he could not understand Eastern theology. The Shinto priest replies, "We do not have theology, we dance".' And Hedley Beare takes up

this interlude by saying, 'What our students need in the 1990s then, and I am in deadly earnest, is the message of the heart, the awareness that the universe is a harmonious dance and that usually our best response is to let our spirits dance with it. For the 1990s we need educators, parents, schools and a society who can help children to identify with the *being-ness* and *becoming-ness*, that dance, in balanced harmony, at the expansive heart of the universe.'

Who best can give this to our Aboriginal children in the nasty here and now? We see the harmony, the balance of our Aboriginal students becoming disintegrated because of the problem of drug addiction and the power of the socialisation process. It doesn't matter how many new packages we put in our schools if we fail to 'invite' people to believe in themselves — and where to begin — our local Aboriginal teachers. And it is at this point that I now invite you, my listeners, to travel with me into the 'milimika' ground, i.e. the ground prepared for a Tiwi ceremony, for it is here that I am learning to be part of the group rather than the leader.

The NT Education policy as we all know has for quite a few years set up strategies to train Aboriginal people to become teachers, literacy workers, Principals. We began this early in the 1970s. In fact, upon the death of Anastasia Kelantamama, our first Batchelor-trained teacher, the then school board members approached me to rename the school 'Murrupurtiyanuwu' in memory of her. What was this saying? Perhaps it was pointing out the fact that a new *spirit* was needed. This was in 1990.

Also at this time a Tiwi concept of naming the stage at where their children were at emerged. Instead of classifying classes in the western mode we moved into Tiwi classification. By this I mean instead of Preschool — Early childhood Primary — Secondary, the Tiwi named these areas more to do with physical growth than academic progress. Thus we have:

Pwakayini	(Preschool)
Jirnani	(Early Childhood)
Jipakiyayi	(Primary)
Yangali	(Secondary)

In 1992 we of our own accord set up a training program for a Tiwi deputy principal as no funding for such was given. Yet something was missing and we never moved from the western mode of authority structures. I can see now that Freire's point that 'everyone has different perspectives based on their own experiences' was not understood by me, the principal. We non-Aboriginal people were born with the values of our parents and the teaching experiences of our grandfathers and the many other forebears and experiences that have provided the currents in which we assimilate and accommodate new experiences. Our Aboriginal people were born amid other currents and have other collective memories and aggregate experiences in an entirely different swim. I see now it was my insecurity to allow others to dialogue.

This year Murrupurtiyanuwu is grateful to Bill Griffiths, our director of Catholic Education and Sr Trudy Keur, the Assistant Director, for the interest and support given to us in this our first year of having a Principal-in-Training. Every three weeks, Sr Trudy visits us and mentors us along the way. Both Bill and Trudy set up meetings with the Tiwi Land Council, Local Council, Women's group, school staff, local teachers before the program was launched. I was given freedom to set out with Sita, the Principal-in-Training as I thought best. Term 1 was almost a disaster — I couldn't let go, we had no infrastructure and very little dialogue. I was Principal and had very little time to train a Tiwi Principal.

Let me now return to the Milimika Circle as mentioned earlier. The term 'milimika' refers to a cleared ground that has been prepared for ceremony; it is sometimes difficult to really find who is the leader — yet the ceremony goes on because of the knowledge of culture and what is demanded by the group. Now, how does this 'circle' fit in with the process of learning? — the school. The answer is — in this 'milimika' circle you have the *infrastructure* to hold a ceremony.

I have found, having listened at last to the Tiwi, that they look at education and the organisation of the school as a 'milimika' ground. The school is a place of ceremony. Things happen at school.

Different people are leaders at different times. This gives the *infrastructure* needed to be at times a leader, at times a follower.

At this point I would like to share how this tremendous insight shook the solid foundation of my western style of leadership.

On one visit of our Assistant Director for Catholic Education we were asked to draw up an 'infrastructure' as to who we thought could support Sita, our principal-in-training. This was authentic 'Tiwi way' of leadership, i.e. group leadership. Gently the proposal was indicated, yet in my insecurity, I held on to the running of the school in the only way I knew. Sita went ahead. She chose four local teachers, one from each skin group to support her. Here was the infrastructure, the milimika circle. She also chose four elders, each from the skin groups. This was in place, yet I was not coping.

Term 2, 1995 commenced very shakily. There were quite a few problems and upsets. Then on 31 May, at one of Trudy's visits to Sita and myself, I was challenged to look at the infrastructure Sita had set up and to use it. Like St Paul, I was thrown from my secure saddle and the moment of truth was before me. Physically, I left the room in complete pain of my inability to 'let go.' Yet here was the gauntlet of challenge to really become a group member of the milimika circle. The ceremony had begun.

We held meeting after meeting, following the pattern of the 'milimika' circle, i.e. sometimes we were leaders, sometimes we were followers. We began to realise that Hedley Beare's philosophy could be ours. We began to dance, i.e. to dialogue in a balanced harmony. Validity of another point of view became a *reality*.

This is why I say in Tiwi Education there is no turning back. At Murrupurtiyanuwu now there is no Assistant Principal but rather in our ceremony ring there are five people. These five are Tiwi dialoguing together at times, and at times with the whole staff. At present the Milimika group is working through the Assistant-Principal's Duty statement and rewriting it to meet the needs of the school in the here and now.

In discussing and taking on new responsibility I see as Hedley Beare states, that we are creating a new spirit here at Murrupurtiyanuwu, 'we need in short a new spirit to infuse

education, not simply a new package of programs' (Beare p.9). Taking on responsibility for our Tiwi women is difficult. They are 'group' people, they find it daunting to confront. Thus in the Milimika circle the group confronts not the individual. When plans go wrong as they surely will in all walks of life, the question we ask now is: 'What then?' This is proving life-giving. For when we meet 'what then' we are learning to be responsible for our plans and in many cases learning a lesson that discussion together is the only solution to find the 'what then' answer in our journey through localisation. This group meets one afternoon a week with Sita and myself to **dialogue** — as Freire stated, 'people need to dialogue, to acknowledge the other person's perspective and find some common ground.' We do this on our ceremony ground.

What about the curriculum matters that need to be addressed? Without an Assistant Principal the group invited non-Tiwi teachers to take on more responsibility for the English Language area. Therefore the Coordinators, Primary and Secondary have responded to the invitation and have taken on full responsibility for all matters relating to the western mode of education. We feel **good** about the changes and we have commenced to 'dance' in our circle, realising that sometimes we lead and other times we follow. We feel the infrastructure is in place and its main task is to invite and re-invite people to believe in themselves.

I would like to stress again Beare's philosophy that what is needed in the 1990s is 'the message of the heart.' I feel that our local Tiwi teachers can do this because they know where the children are coming from, what they appreciate, how they feel, what they find difficult, and what they find easy, what motivates them, how to get them interested, how to make education meaningful for them.

Barry Dwyer, who is Area Administrator in the Catholic Education Office in Parramatta, NSW, and is a much sought after speaker for Education Conferences refers to this message of the heart in his recent paper 'Time for a Primary Manifesto.' He writes 'you just don't hear a lot of talk (officially, anyway) these days about "growing", "playing", "discovering", "creating", "experimenting", "exploring", "learning" and "celebrating". I suppose it's all too soft

and mushy — too “primary” — in the hard-headed world of “competencies” and “excellence”.’

Let us remember that for the Tiwi teacher (and I would stress here that this is true for all Aboriginal groups) it is the *Who* they relate to that is important. Each group has an insider’s knowledge of their group — sometimes not always easy to articulate. We need to take note of the hidden meaning of ways of being and doing, and who better than the people from the inside.

The ‘spirit’ is what gives life, so for the Tiwi it makes immense sense to have a leadership which children can sense can give life — hence having representation from each of their ‘spirit’ — ‘yiminga’ groups gives life to Tiwi education.

In conclusion, having invited you to ‘dance’ with us as we move into the *reality* of Education at Murrupurtiyanuwu, you, I hope, have seen that this *reality* with and for the Tiwi, is becoming firmly rooted not only in the content of curriculum but in the very warp and woof of their world view. Having placed their own infrastructure, viz. the milimika ring, I believe that they have taken to themselves what Hedley Beare urges all educators to do, viz. ‘to value gaiety, playfulness and an organic connectedness in our education.’

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BEARE, Hedley, Occasional Paper no. 12. *The Curriculum for the 1990s, A New Package or a New Spirit?* James Darling House, 42 Geils Court, Deakin, ACT.
- BUBER, M 1979, *Education between Man and Man*. RG Smith. William Collins & Sons, Glasgow.
- FREIRE, P 1972, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
- 1978, *Politics in Education*.

JAPULU KANKARRA

(The Father in Heaven)

Part V: Myths

Kevin McKelson sac

Paliny pukarrikirri yimpilimurnu nyurraku partanykarranguku.
(Children, I will tell you a story from the Dream Time.)

So Tommy Dodd RIP started his stories, when he told me some in Nyangumarta back in 1968. Here is a gist of some of them. May they speak immediately for themselves. A comment is appended.

1. The Emu and the Turkey (*Kalaya pa Kalimartaji*)

Back in the Dream Time a long time ago an Emu man went hunting and collecting wild gardenia. He killed the game and gathered the bush tucker which he put into a coolamon. He then returned to his camp where his wife was waiting for him. She gave him water and then put the surplus berries into a hole at the base of a tree between its roots, covering the hole with soil to keep them fresh.

His wife ground the bush tucker and cooked it in the campfire together with the game. Then they both ate their food. This they would do every day as long as there were game and bush tucker in the area.

One day a Turkey man came to their camp. He then went with the Emu man every day out into the bush, hunting and gathering food. However, on one occasion he returned early from the hunt alone. He called out to the Emu man's wife and ran away with her in the direction of the Fitzroy River.

That evening, when the Emu man came back to his camp, he realised his wife was not there and he looked everywhere for her. He soon found the footprints of his wife and that of the Turkey man and realised he had abducted his wife. Next morning he was

Fr Kevin McKelson sac, presently chaplain at Notre Dame Centre, Broome Campus (WA). This is the fifth in his series of missionary autobiography.

up before dawn and set off in pursuit. He travelled all day and camped that night. Next morning following the tracks, he found the pair by a water hole. He speared the Turkey man and brought his wife back to their camp.

Comment on Story 1:

This story goes to the heart of Aboriginal culture. It concerns marriage. On hearing this story an Aboriginal child would suppose that the woman had been promised in marriage to her husband, had been brought to her husband's camp by her husband's uncle, his mother's brother and his uncle's wife, his mother-in-law with whom he can have absolutely no direct contact, not even being permitted to call her by name. Up till the marriage however, and beyond, he gives her presents through his uncle. The promised woman would have been brought to her future husband's camp when quite young. There would have been no freedom of choice.

Yet the purpose of this procedure was to implement the kinship laws and protect the value of marriage as an institution. This is a value also cherished by the Church and should be nourished and fostered within the Aboriginal framework in presenting the ideal of christian marriage to its future and actual members. These values of kinship and preserving the family do not seem to be stressed by spokespeople for the Aboriginal cause. Their emphasis is on land. But land is to kinship what the body is to the soul. Within the tribal framework there were also instances when the strong and powerful had their way and infringed the kinship laws and got away with it. Human nature does not change, but might is not right within any society.

2. The Wicked Possum (*Larnkurr*)

A Possum man was wandering over the country camping at water holes and looking out for people. One day he met a big mob of them including men and uninitiated youths.

They asked him: 'Where are you coming from?'

'From the south' he answered, 'and I have come to invite you to a meeting. If you like, I will take the boys down for the meeting. You can come afterwards.'

The people agreed so the Possum man, taking some boys with him, went south in the direction from where he had come. On and on they went and that night they made a dry camp (they camped without water). Next morning they were up early and went on their way. As they went the boys asked the Possum man, 'Is there water close by?'

'Yes' he replied, 'further south there is water over there.' He then pointed to a distant hill.

The young men by this time were very thirsty and very weak, but they believed the Possum man and struggled on. When they came to the hill, the Possum man put them in the shade and told them to wait. He went north and climbed up a tall tree and from a hollow in the tree watched the young boys. In vain they waited for him and finally they all perished. When he saw this, the Possum man was off again back north (and the story repeats itself). The young boys, gathered again, likewise perished. They had cried to the Possum Man 'Give us water,' but he did not listen.

Meanwhile the people who had given their sons to the Possum man were worried. They had no news of their sons or the meeting. However one of their number had a dream. In the dream he saw the stranger who had taken away the boys. He also saw in his dream how the boys had perished for lack of water and of how the Possum Man had left them dead.

He woke from his dream and told the others. That stranger has killed our boys! He has tricked them. He has told them lies about the meeting. He has caused them to die of thirst. This is my dream.

This time we will wait for him and follow him.

The stranger did come, and invited them to come to the meeting, asking for more boys. This time the people followed him and before he could do any real harm they set upon him attacking him with their stone axes, slashing his neck and spearing him. In fact they cut him to pieces—that wicked Possum Man who had tricked them so badly.

Comment on Story 2:

On hearing this story Aboriginal youths would understand the scene: the supposed youths were being taken away for man-making ceremonies, the first step to their path to manhood. It would have been unthinkable that a young man would have been deprived of water on a journey which took him away from his family on tribal 'business'.

The dream is a device used by the story teller to solve the problem in which the people found themselves.

In Elizabethan plays, whenever the situation seemed to be without solution, a person would fall from the top of the stage with the answer to the problem. This kind of intervention was called the *Deus ex machina* — the God from the machine. The dream sequences seem to have served the same purpose. Dreams also served a useful purpose in the bible. Think of Joseph telling the Pharaoh the meaning of his dream, and later a dream inspired by God relieved St Joseph of immense worry. The punishment meted out to the wicked Possum Man is like the one threatened by Lamech in Genesis 4:25. . .seventy seven fold unlimited. . .Usually it was the eye for an eye, limb for limb type, decreed in Deut.19:21.

Perhaps through this story Aboriginal youths would be also taught not to believe all which others tell them, especially if they are strangers. In this myth the boys were supposedly being taken by the Possum Man to initiation ceremonies. Initiation is a key ritual in Aboriginal society. Early in his Episcopate, Bishop Jobst directed his clergy that they should respect this feature of Aboriginal culture as it was essential to their social standing within the tribe.

3. The Eagle and the Owl (*Walakurra pa Kurrkurr*)

Once upon a time the Eagle and Owl camped together and spent their time making boomerangs, spear throwers, shields and spears. The Owl worked very fast and finished his work in one day. The Eagle was very slow and took his time to do the work. The Owl made twenty boomerangs and four shields on one day while the Eagle took many days to do the same thing. The Owl was cross with the Eagle for working so slowly and became restless. He

went off hunting while the Eagle went ahead quietly and slowly doing his work. The Owl brought back game to the camp and cooked it. Both sat down and had their meal.

The next morning the Owl was up early and said he was off hunting. But this time he went and cut a straight piece of wood for himself and sharpened it as sharp and pointed as he could. He then dug a hole, put the sharp stick in the hole, pointed upwards, gathered some bushes and made a trap for a bandicoot. He then caught a bandicoot and put it into the trap. He then went back to the camp, had a drink of water and had his meal with the Eagle.

Next morning on rising he said to the Eagle, 'I have left a bandicoot back in the bush. Let's go and get it.' They came to the trap and saw the bandicoot inside. The Eagle was excited and the Owl told him to go in and get the bandicoot. He did so, but in so doing he stepped on the sharp stake which pierced his foot right through so that he could not move. He cried out to the Owl: 'Come to me; something has pierced my foot!' But the Owl ran off.

Not long afterwards the older brother of the Eagle came along looking for his younger brother. He saw all the boomerangs, shields, spear throwers and spears his brother had made lying on the ground, but nowhere could he see his brother. So he set off looking for his brother and his partner, the Owl. He tracked them both and finally he found his brother with the stake sticking out of his foot. 'The Owl has killed him', he thought to himself. 'I will go and track him down.'

He took a very sharp stone with him and tracked the Owl down. He soon found him. He was dancing with his friends. The dead Eagle's brother joined in the dancing and moved closer to the Owl. 'Come closer,' he cried out to him. The Owl danced closer and the Eagle stabbed him in his belly and ran off. All cried for him and asked, 'Where shall we put you?' 'Put me in a hollow tree,' he answered. The Owl man became a bird and flew into the hollow of a tree.

That is why Owls live in hollow trees, and this they have done since the Dream Time.

4. The Murderer (*Makapal*)

A man lit a bush fire. He had two wives. He said, 'Let's go to the burnt country and hunt game!' One wife had a baby and stayed in the camp close to water. The other went with her husband and hunted game. When they had enough they returned to the camp where the game was cooked and eaten. Then they all went to sleep. The woman with the child slept by herself. In the middle of the night a stranger came and saw the sleeping couple. The man was snoring. The stranger approached and speared him. The woman ran away while the murderer fled in an easterly direction where he met some people. The women returned to the camp and saw their husband dead with the spear sticking out of him.

The smaller of the two women ran to an ant bed, rubbed herself with ant bed and changed herself into a dog. The woman with the child stayed in the camp. The woman who had become a dog followed the tracks of the murderer to the east. The people saw the dog and asked, 'Whose dog is that?' 'Mine,' the murderer said. That night while they all slept, the dog approached the sleeping man and bit him in the neck. Then he disembowelled him. The dog came back and met the other woman, and changed herself back into a woman. 'I have killed that murderer. I have bitten him.'

Comment on Story 4:

This story strikingly expresses one of the most profound aspects of Aboriginal culture, namely the ability of some individuals to change their shape according to a particular circumstance or need. I call this mythical transformation. May I very tentatively suggest this power to change one's shape can be compared to the power of the risen Christ to appear in various ways to others but always as Jesus. Perhaps it could also be compared to instances in the Old Testament when God manifested his presence to Moses in the burning bush, or to Elijah through means of a gentle wind. (May I insert a small word: when I asked Tommy Dodd RIP to describe in Nyangumarta a bush that was burning yet remained unaffected, he unhesitatingly offered *mirlka kurku* without charcoal) to describe the bush that was burnt but not consumed.

The punishment given is an instance of pay back; in this case a surely justifiable punishment. The power to change one's shape was used in this instance like the dream to see that justice was done.

5. The Native Cat (*Yulupurrku*)

The Native Cat came from the south and camped at a water hole. He met two men who asked him: 'Where do you come from?' They chatted a while and he suggested to them. 'Let's go to a meeting to a Kangkularri ceremony (ceremony where social solidarity is confirmed). All went well and they left the ceremony in good spirits. The Native Cat walked in front while the other two came behind. Suddenly a bird flew between them which caused the two men to laugh. The Native Cat got wild as he thought they were laughing at him. He was so wild that when he returned to his camp he sharpened his stone axe and made a spear. They all went to sleep.

In the middle of the night the Native Cat got up, looked at the two men who were snoring. He then hit them both with his axe and speared them with his spear.

The Native Cat went south and met some people. They were going north; the Cat went with them and finally they came upon the two who had been killed. Then the mother of the two men came from the north looking for her two sons. The Cat came from the south. The mother saw him and asked, 'Where are my two children?' He replied, 'I have killed them.' She cried for them. The Cat asked her, 'Will you cook them for us?' The mother was upset and called the people to her two dead sons. The Cat showed them to her and asked again, 'Will you cook them for us?' The mother went and collected wood. She went to her sons, made an incision in their stomachs, put a powerful spirit inside the stomach and then closed the incision with a bone. Then she cooked them in the fire.

People came from the south to the earth oven and stood around the fire. Suddenly their stomachs, swollen from the fire, burst open and killed the lot of them.

Comment on Story 5:

I have always found this story puzzling as it was told to me with simplicity. Had the Native Cat not been so touchy, all would

have gone well. After all, the three had just participated in the blood brotherhood ceremony through which they would have felt their solidarity strengthened as members of the tribe. Without embarrassment, the Native Cat asks the mother to cook her two sons.

I asked Tommy one day about cannibalism. He said people practised it in the past, but not these days. The mother did not lose her basic self-possession whilst planning a terrible revenge. The powerful spirit she put in the stomach of her sons is called a *mirurru* and is usually regarded as an evil spirit. Here the woman is using the spirit however, to inflict rudimentary but very effective justice on the criminals and those who had gathered to share the meal.

This aspect of Aboriginal culture should not be condemned too much from a holier-than-thou attitude. The recalling of World War II and modern atrocities witnessed on TV should give us pause though we wish for a better world in which justice, peace and love hold sway. In cases like this, where powerful spirits cause harm to people even justifiably, we christians should recall and propose that Christ, according to Colossians, is more powerful than any other spirit, and support our claims by a standard of behaviour which indicates the power of Christ's Spirit is manifest in the goodness of our own lives.

6. The Kestrel and the Two Finches (*Jurni pa Minyarrijiirri*)

A Kestrel had two wives. He went hunting. His two wives stayed in the camp close to water. The man returned with his game and told his two wives to go and get some wood, but both refused and said to one another, 'You go!'

The man said, 'I will go myself. You both are really lazy.' He collected wood and on returning said to his two wives, 'Cook the meat!' But the two women refused and said to one another, 'You cook it!' Then the man said, 'I will do the cooking.' He cooked the meat, took it out of the fire and gave it to them. They all ate the meat. Then he said, 'Let's go hunting!' This time they all went.

The two women saw a possum in the hollow of a tree and climbed up to get it. But the man made the tree grow very tall

indeed, so much so that the women sang out, 'Save us,' and began to cry. But the husband took no notice and said, 'You both are really lazy. Both of you have never taken notice of me. You have never heeded my word.' Thereupon he cut the tree down. The two women fell down from a great height and perished. The husband was the Kestrel and the two women became Finches.

Comment on Story 6:

The interesting thing to note in this story is that given similar situations, human beings will react in a similar way, no matter to which culture they belong. Secondly, the long-suffering and peeved husband had the power to make the tree grow taller. The two shrewish wives became finches and certainly survived, although in another form, to see another day.

GENERAL REMARKS ON MYTHOLOGY

The question arises: whence came the extraordinary power described in some of these stories to bewitch, for whatever motive, another human being? Or whence came the power of mythical transformation, or the power of the culture Heroes described elsewhere, to change the shape of existing things such as the shape of a hill to make a valley so that they could pass through? Whence came the power of the Two Men to lift the veil of darkness from the world so that the light of the sun could stream in? A truly remarkable achievement by any stretch of the imagination. Perhaps they did not know, or perhaps over a period of thousands of years they forgot if they did, retaining however a distinct belief that in an age long past, the Dream Time, their ancestors were endowed with such power.

In another context, no less striking and challenging, Gulpili in 'Stories from the Dream Time' writes and I quote from another quotation: 'To the Aboriginal death is not the end of life. Death is the last ceremony in this present life; then the soul is reborn, thus all living people are reincarnations of the dead. The soul lives and finds a new body to inhabit. This belief in reincarnation provides a direct link back to their ancestors of the Dream Time.'

This is heavy stuff. Dr Petri mentioned this type of belief to me on several occasions. In another context he said the people believe the mythical ancestors are present in their boards. The western mentality, or rather theological mind set, took over in me then and I asked myself: 'Is their claimed presence moral or real?' And I have asked others, a couple of colleagues, the same. For me to interpret the nature of the board is to understand at least inchoatively the nature of the Aboriginal world view. One thing is for sure, both the christian and Aboriginal belief systems are based on Tradition, on words, which in christianity is enshrined in a Book, and in the belief system of the Aborigines in Board or on Stone. The christian tradition is conveyed in written words. . . Aboriginal tradition in symbols which of course for the initiated are meaningful.

We christians believe that our belief gives mankind an answer to the big questions. We do also believe that the Aboriginal world view was a brilliant attempt to explain the reason of things according to their lights. Perhaps I could with humility try to compare the two, bearing in mind that here I as a christian walk by faith, a faith which a traditionally oriented Aborigine may completely disagree with.

The christian position is this. We believe that there is one supreme Spirit God 'who made the heaven and the earth and sea and all that is in them,' (Acts 14;15) who calls into existence things which do not exist (Rom 4.17) in whom 'we live move and have our being,' (Acts 17.28). We believe that in the beginning there was the Word ... the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh ... and lived among us ... We believe that Jesus Christ is that Word who became man, God's only Son who is close to his Father's heart and who made him known (cf. John 1).

If that is true, and we believe it to be true, then we also believe that same God wished everyone to be saved, to enjoy eternal happiness with God when we shall see him as he is. If that is true, we believe that Christ is the true light which enlightens everyone and has come into the world. Then we also must believe that all human beings have received that light to the degree they are capable of.

Why, we do not know.

God may do what he wills.

We do not know why God chose the Jews to bring his message to people and why, after they had rejected his Son Jesus, he chose all those who believe in him to be his people. Here we walk in faith.

May I compare the efforts of the Kurangara people, who made their way in primeval twilight across the country to discover the sources of life-giving water, to that of Moses wandering through the *pintan* leading his people and giving them water on their way back to their country. May I compare the efforts of the Two Men to lift the veil of darkness from the earth to that of the Prophets who tried to tell people more about God. May I compare the light of the sun which the Two Men let in, to Jesus Christ the Light of the world and one whom if we follow, we will not walk in darkness.

The Catholic Church true to its mission of proposing the word Christ to all nations, directs those entrusted with this mission to bring nothing but the faith to those it evangelises and not to spurn or reject peoples' rites and customs unless they are depraved — indeed on the contrary it urges them to keep them. The directions here given reflect a direction given to missionaries by Rome in 1659 and which has been ratified by Vatican 2 and the pronouncements of Popes. Indeed in 1986 at Alice Springs, Pope John Paul II said that Aboriginal culture should not be allowed to disappear and that we missionaries who have devoted ourselves to the work of proposing the message of Jesus to Aboriginal people should be constantly aware of the rich culture and behavioural system which they possess.

Allow me to quote the Holy Father exactly: 'The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks all languages, it esteems and embraces all cultures. It supports them in everything human and when necessary, it purifies them. Always and everywhere the Gospel uplifts and enriches cultures with the revealed message of a loving and merciful God. That Gospel invites you to become through and through Aboriginal Christians. As you listen to the Gospel, seek out the best things of your traditional ways. If you do, you will come to realise more and more your great human and christian

dignity. Let your minds and hearts be strengthened to begin a new life now.'

The dialogue to which the Holy Father encourages us to pursue will be fruitful but it will be laborious. But we of another culture should not take things for granted and reflect seriously what the term Aboriginal Christian means. I for one believe that it offers to our Aboriginal Brothers and Sisters an opportunity to worship and practice their faith in an environment in which they do not feel alienated — one in which they feel at home. If we are permitted to be associated with them in the process of interculturalisation, let us remember that in the words of one African Bishop, the end of Inculturation is Love.

Notes

1. Suggested Reading:

a) Chapter 4 of 'A Theology of the Old Testament' by John McKenzie, which deals with myth, in which he says he is following the explanation of Ernst Cassirer.

b) 'How to Read the Old Testament', p.21 by Etienne Charpentier OP, where a whole page is devoted to myth and its relevance to the bible.

c) *Reincarnation: Illusion or Reality* by Edmund Robillard OP. Indian connection.

2. *Note on Quickening*, K McKelson. (An Observation). The spirit children dwell in trees or in some other nature venue such as a spring or water hole. Their role could be to quicken the material left by coitus. The spirit child *rayi* or *yatangkal* is different from the *pilyurr* which seems to be the spiritual component in a person's make up. On death the *pilyurr* leaves the body but remains close to it say, in the area where the burial will take place. At La Grange the people asked me to invoke the presence of the *pilyurr*, the spirit of the dead person by such sentences as: 'You have left us! Look at us! Care for us! Wait for us!' Together with such invocations I added prayers like: 'You have left your children behind. You are hidden from us. You will go to the Father in heaven. He will receive your spirit (*pilyurr*).'

The spirit child is deemed to return to the place of its pre-existence before embarking on another process of quickening. Catholics however believe that God creates the soul which becomes the quickening principle in the formation of a human being.

3. *Tommy Dodd on Conception:*

Pukarri minirri partany ngarlungu. Lit. He dreams a child in the stomach. *Ngalpinyili ngnalyunji.* It enters into the woman.

4. *Definition of a Myth:* A myth is a human action which in the course of time comes to be regarded as a divine one or a super human one. I copied out the substance of this definition given by a Mr Wolverton and added 'a super human one.' (K. McK.)



Notice

A new revised edition of Fr Ernest Worms' *Australian Aboriginal Religions* is being prepared. The Pallottines have given financial backing to the venture: Ernest Worms was one of their confreres - even though the original German edition back in 1968 made an egregious typo in naming him as 'SVD'!

Our English translation, a combined effort by Fr Dan O'Donovan, Professor Max Charlesworth and myself, published in 1986, laboured under the big handicap that none of us had much knowledge of German and produced our English version through the medium of a French translation. We thought it better to have somewhat defective access to this important work than, in pursuit of perfection, to have nothing at all.

This time we have the skilled cooperation of a German Pallottine, Gerhard Christoph, and various associates who conduct the school at Tardun, Western Australia.

We would hope to have the book published by the end of this year. Spectrum, Melbourne, will care for its distribution.

BOOK REVIEW

Echema. Austin 1995, *Corporate Personality in Traditional Igbo Society and the Sacrament of Reconciliation*. European University Studies, series XXIII, Theology. Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main. ISBN 3-631-49185-9. 334 pp., soft cover, 77 DM, about \$41AUD.

Austin Echema is a Nigerian priest (born 1958) who after seminary studies in Nigeria worked for his doctorate in theology at the Hochschule Sankt Georgen, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. The present book grew out of his doctoral thesis, which was publicly defended on 12 July 1994 at Frankfurt. The moderator of the thesis was Professor Doctor Ludwig Bertsch sj, director of the Missiological Institute 'Missio', Aachen. I daresay it is through this Missio connection that I was invited to review the book. (Cf. *Nelen Yubu* No.56, 1994, pp.1-4, 'Inculturation Consultation, Missio, Aachen 1994')

The interest for *Nelen Yubu* readers in such a work is that it documents an activity in a different but not dissimilar cultural context which should be paralleled here in the Australian scene.

The book is a practical exercise in the inculturation process enjoined by Vatican II and *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. The particular element to be incarnated into the local Igbo culture is the sacrament of Reconciliation. (In my own text when referring to the sacrament rather than the common noun I shall use an initial capital.)

We all know that the sacrament of Reconciliation is passing through critical times. I daresay I am not the only priest who of recent years has spent complete scheduled periods in a confessional as confessor with absolutely no confession to hear. As Echema points out (p.219), it is not just the ordinary Christifideles but also the officially devout, the Religious and priests, who have moved far away from the former practice of weekly confession, as enjoined in canon 595 of the old code — significantly, the new code just says 'frequently'.

Paradoxically, among the Igbo of Nigeria the problem is not neglect of the sacrament but its apparent ineffectiveness.

In the Igbo Church, for example, the problem of the sacrament of reconciliation is not that of decrease in the number of confessions as such. As a matter of fact those who measure the quality of faith in terms of the numerical progress may not agree that this sacrament is in crisis. Frequent confession has been a common practice right from the first day of Catholicism among the Igbo. Even today one sees lengthy lines of penitents in most parish Churches. (p.220)

The nub of the problem among the Igbo is that in their traditional culture they had ceremonies that mended social hurt; these ceremonies have been displaced among Christians by Reconciliation (though more likely called 'Confession' or 'Penance') which with its highly individualised and private manner, imported from Western Europe by European missionaries, quite fails to cope with the *social* dimension of sin. The 'lengthy lines of penitents' Echema referred to above is mainly made up of 'children fresh from their catechism classes and aged women'.

Echema states (p.221) that 'The crisis of the sacrament of reconciliation as it exists in Igbo Church is that of the lack of a contextual theology.' The main aim of Echema's book is to display, on the one hand, the rich social context in Igboland with traditional ceremonies that really did mend rents in the social structure. Such rents were traditionally traced back to the faults of individuals: the first stage in the healing process was public acknowledgment, confession, of the faults. On the other hand, especially in Ch.4 'An historical review of the sacrament of reconciliation' pp.155-215, Echema displays the variety in practice of Reconciliation in the church. In the early centuries most Christians would never have received the sacrament; if they did, they could do it only once; the ensuing penalties were such that it was considered better to wait for a deathbed repentance...(pp.156-164). Then 'Tariff Penance' (pp. 167-170); monastic ritual (pp.170-176); the 'Private Rite' from 11th century to today. Finally, the mixed bag of three rites resulting from Vatican II: the first is weak on the social, ecclesial dimension of sin and reconciliation; the third maximises the communal aspect but rather underplays the individual healing aspect of Reconciliation

and also confuses the issue with the injunction of later tabulated confession of serious sins; the second does combine both communal and individual aspects but is either impractical or counter-productive except for small groups with a *copia* of confessors and tons of time.

Echema does provide a model rite for Igboland on pp.285-288, but the main value of his book for those of us who live elsewhere is that it both underscores the problems in a revelatory sort of way and indicates the great potential of a Reconciliation ceremony that would be open to the actual social context, whether in Igboland, Africa, Europe, Australia or anywhere. The book is well researched, planned and written. A pleasing feature is the provision of ample summaries at the end of each chapter.

It is also well produced. Very few typographical errors. A few unusual uses of English phrases. The font used for footnote indices is too big, especially when used in indented text set solid: they impinge on a descender in the line above, e.g. on p.131. My main complaint is with the use of an em dash instead of a hyphen throughout the book, e.g. 'wrong—doing' instead of 'wrong-doing'. It really inhibits the flow of reading.

— Martin Wilson msc

From the Secretary's Desk . . .

Nelen Yubu is now happily ensconced at Kensington, after dozens of trips from Dadirri in Drummoyne with gear and more gear ad infin. The accommodation is very comfortable, and the office has taken shape after much banging of bookshelves going up, trundling of furniture down the corridors in noisy trolleys — and I fear sometimes a bit of disturbance during siestas. But residents in the west wing were very understanding, and I am personally grateful to the MSC brothers who came to my rescue on various occasions. Brs. Peter Whelan, Stanley Neissen, Jack Boelan and Bernard Delaney were patient and kind, ever cheerful despite my frequent calls for help during the Nelen Yubu moving-in days. So I regard them all as true Brothers indeed, and I thank them for their friendship despite my erratic, sometimes inane pleas for assistance of one kind or another.

Since staying in East Sydney I have found myself passing through many parts of the city

that I'd never seen before. Little back streets looking cool and shaded by overhanging trees, especially beautiful melaleucas (paperbarks). It is amazing how these northern trees can flourish in inner city streets.

Of course they immediately reminded me of an escapade in a paperbark forest on Melville Island. It was my birthday and the thoughtful priest-in-charge said: 'Come on, I'll take you out to look for bush orchids in the melaleucas as a birthday treat.' Mass was to be at 5pm, so we had a couple of hours to fossick about for my favourite plant. In a rather distant plantation, close to a croc-infested arm of the river, Father promptly left the truck to search through the swamps, scanning high branches and determined to give me a pleasant surprise for my birthday. I went off in another direction, didn't see any likely specimens, felt a bit weary, so decided to climb back into the truck and have a sleep.

An hour later, waking with a start — no sign of His Reverence! After calling to the empty bush, I stood up on the truck and yelled at the top of my voice, finally blowing the horn. Not a stir. This went on for an

hour, getting perilously close to Mass time. At last I decided he must have fallen from a tree, or drowned in a billabong.

Fearing I'd run the battery down I gave a last mighty blast of the horn, then started up and headed for the mission at Pularumpi. At breakneck speed I tore along, eventually skirting the airstrip where several grinning, shouting Tiwi obviously wanted to know where Father was. Straight to the police station to find, mercifully, that Const. Paul was at home. Terribly upset by this time I gabbled out my story and begged him to come and try to find our priest. He was quite calm, patted me on the shoulder and said: 'You lead — I'll follow in the police van.'

As we flew back through the village everyone was out to see us, all waving and shouting questions. I only slowed down to ask someone to tell the Sisters that Mass would be a bit late. Late? What if there were no Mass at all because there was no priest! Paul kept up with me on the long desperate drive — till just as we reached the swamp, on the side of the road leaning against a melaleuca and clutching a magnificent bunch of bush orchids, stood our quarry!

Jumping out of our respective vehicles we found him fit and well. Indeed, he had wandered away too far and become completely bushed, hadn't heard my horn-blowing but thought he detected a distant truck starting up and taking off, which he had to presume was me — so he pushed off in that direction and finally heard us returning.

What relief! Paul grinned. All in the day's work for him — including chasing frantic women through haunted paperbark forests in the wilds of Melville Island.

'Anyhow, have a happy birthday, Keren!' he laughed as he turned the police van for home.

* * * * *

Nelen Yubu is presently busy investigating the construction of a home page on the Web for the Australian MSC Province. At this stage we are consulting various ISPs (Internet Service Providers).

* * * * *

Best wishes to all.

Secretary Keren

MSC ABORIGINAL MINISTRY CONFERENCE

We MSCs of the Australian Province propose to institute an *MSC Aboriginal Ministry Conference* in recognition of the ever present need to share insights into ministry, to co-ordinate our ministry with Aboriginal people, to keep before the Province this ministry as a clear expression of our MSC charism and the legacy of our Province from its earliest days in Australia. We recognise further, that our MSC involvement with Aborigines is wider than the NT, and we want to keep before the Province the scope for this ministry in every MSC apostolate. We need to present our vision of mission clearly to those in formation to attract young MSCs to it and to help prepare them for it.

* * * * *

This Conference extends membership to all who are directly involved in ministry to Aboriginal people in their own homelands, as in the Northern Territory; those involved in Aboriginal ministry in rural and urban areas, e.g. the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry in Sydney; those involved in research and publication, e.g. the Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit; those whose ministry involves them in particular ways with Aboriginal people, e.g. St John's College; and those in any apostolate who are interested in supporting Aboriginal people and Aboriginal ministry in some way through their own ministry.

We believe that direct involvement with Aboriginal people requires a distinct love and call. This Conference is open to all who feel such a call.

We give our full support to the statement of the Daly River Conference (October 5, 1995): we commit ourselves to continuing dialogue with our [Aboriginal] brothers and sisters. We see this as a 'necessary foundation for the journey toward an inculturated Aboriginal Church'.

Bulletin Board

Purposes of the Conference:

1. To encourage those in Aboriginal ministry on an Australia-wide basis;
2. in dialogue with Aboriginal people, to promote study and discussion in areas of missiological, liturgical and educational concern, and so to develop ways of vitalising our approach to Aboriginal ministry;
3. to develop a spirituality for those involved in such cross-cultural ministry;
4. to encourage and aid the preparation of those who wish to enter into Aboriginal ministry.

Means Available:

Some suggested means to fulfil these purposes are

- ◆ a newsletter or regular 'Bulletin Board' in *Nelen Yubu*;
- ◆ published dialogue and discussion;
- ◆ occasional seminars and workshops;
- ◆ an annual meeting of the Conference.

Those who would like to become members of the MSC Aboriginal Ministry Conference could contact the Provincial Secretary.

Committee:

Frank Fletcher, Peter Hearn, Leo Wearden, Martin Wilson.

Founding Forum for Members of Religious Congregations involved in Ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Some members of religious congregations involved in Ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been consulting recently about the possibility and desirability of founding a group that would form a network of interaction among their congregations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A consultation is being arranged for some 20 or so participants at the Red Centre Resort, Alice Springs, 4-6 October 1996. Quoting from the brochure:

Participants: One nominated contact person from each congregation. For larger congregations with members involved in a wide range of ministries, one person to represent approximately each ten in Aboriginal ministry. This would enable representation from remote communities, and urban and rural involvement in various forms.

Purpose: To provide an opportunity for representatives from all religious congregations to come together to share something of the scope of their involvement with Aboriginal people and to discuss whether or not to form a group which will continue into the future.

Members of the NATSICC executive have indicated their support for such a forum, where religious can come together to discuss their issues and concerns.

Process: Representatives will come prepared to share their personal stories together with stories gathered from other members of their own congregations. A facilitator will then lead us to some kind of common vision followed by action which hopefully will reflect the desires of Aboriginal people as we journey with them.'

Costs: Total costs for the three days will be between \$330 and \$412.50 with twin share or single accommodation. Some options could result in a slightly lower fee. Plus, of course, the cost of travel to and from Alice Springs.

The registration form asks for name, congregation, address details, preference for twin share or single and indication of attendance days (all three or a selection).

Program: The overall theme is *Story — Vision — Action*. The main activities will be the sharing of personal stories and vision, and planning for future action.

Contact for further information & registration:

Sr Libby Jordan rsm

ISMA

1 Thomas St

LEWISHAM NSW 2049