

Prayers for the People, Sunday March 9, 2014

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As tomorrow is Canberra Day, celebrating Canberra's naming in 1913, it is appropriate that our thoughts and prayers encompass the Indigenous Peoples from whom the land was taken and from whose language the name was derived, and who continue to struggle in an alien culture that, even if it now has some claim to control its borders, has no claim to control them inhumanely.

Gracious God, who formed the world and populated it, who made us in your image and gave us the dominion of stewardship, and who has blessed those of us who gather here this morning, we are nevertheless aware that we who are greatly privileged have come to be so in a society that has disenfranchised others, decimated their culture, and even now cannot respond adequately to the needs and problems we have created. We cannot roll back the past, but we can work to create a more sensitive and productive present and future. Grant to those who formulate and implement Indigenous policy to do so with a strong recognition of the humanity, needs and concerns of those who preceded us in this land, and enable us both as a community of faith and as individuals to open our eyes to opportunities to assist their recovery and acceptance.

It is with that same sense of societal failure that we also pray for those who, for as many different reasons as our own forebears, have sought to make a new home in this land – for those who come through the channels we have instituted for their admission and for those who have sought other ways of finding a place among us. We do not underestimate the political challenges that this presents or forget the awful exploitation involved in promising passage to our shores. And yet we have arrogantly compounded their plight, exploiting them again for political gain, treating them as though they were not also created in your image, bearing in their persons the potential that we all possess. We pray for better things, not only of our leaders but also from those on whose support our leaders have been able to rely and with whom we daily rub shoulders. Help us to be the salt that purifies, revives and uplifts that which it touches and infuses.

The moral quandary on our borders reminds us that we live in an unstable and fractured world, a world in which oppression, opportunism, struggle, poverty and ignorance, are

the everyday stuff of life. We pray for the people of Ukraine, of Syria, of Venezuela, of the many African states, of the Middle East, and elsewhere. As the Ukrainian situation has shown, even wise leaders do not know how to deal with the myriad intertwining problems that confront attempts to respond to need and demand. We can only fall back on our confidence that you hold this world in your hands and that through the darkness of our doing the promise of resurrection light will eventually come.

Grant us peace, peace in the world but also in our own hearts, not only as we reflect on the larger issues of the day, but also as we deal with the many personal, economic, medical, and relational challenges in our own lives and those of our community. Prepare Alan White as he makes ready to minister to us, and prepare us to receive his gifts. We bring these prayers with the confidence of those who have been taught to pray:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen