

Brisbane Archbishop backs Uluru Statement and an indigenous voice in the Constitution

By [MARK BOWLING](#)
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BRISBANE Archbishop Mark Coleridge has publicly endorsed the Uluru Statement From the Heart – an historic commitment by the Catholic Church to back indigenous leaders from across Australia demanding a constitutional voice.

“Only a heart of stone could allow the indigenous peoples to become aliens, exiles, and refugees in their own land,” Archbishop Coleridge said during Mass for First Nations leaders and parish representatives at the Santa Teresa Spirituality Centre in Ormiston, east of Brisbane last Friday.

Standing on Quandamooka country, Archbishop Coleridge, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, gazed across Moreton Bay to Stradbroke Island (Minjerribah), site of Australia’s first Catholic mission to First Nations peoples, set up by Italian Passionist Fathers more than 170 years ago.



Quandamooka traditional custodian Joshua Walker performs a Welcome to Country at the start of Mass.

“God is going to take out of us that heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh – the heart of Jesus... that recognises the other as a human being,” he said.

“What has been done to the indigenous peoples of this land could only have been done by denying that they were in fact human – they were at best perhaps subhuman.

“A heart of flesh says no to that, absolutely no.”

Speaking just days before the start of the first assembly of the Church’s historic Plenary Council of Australia, Archbishop Coleridge described the poor health and incarceration rate indigenous Australians – the highest in the world – as “a national disgrace”.

A key theme of the Plenary – the first to be held in Australia since 1937 – is ‘renewing the Church’s solidarity with First Australians’.

Following Mass, Archbishop Coleridge formerly endorsed the Uluru Statement From the Heart, a landmark document signed by 250 indigenous leaders in 2017 and invited all Australians “to walk with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples” towards a better nation.

“... I call on all people of goodwill and good intention to support the journey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by endorsing the Uluru Statement From the Heart and putting it into action in every way possible,” he said.

Taken from “The Catholic Leader”