

## Heart of the Dreaming

*A speech given to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Commission in Alice Springs, 2006 by Mark Bin Bakar, Amnesty International Medallion Recipient 2005 for his Contribution to Human Rights.*

I start first and foremost by welcoming everyone here and acknowledging the Arrernte People whose country we are privileged to be in. I also acknowledge all of those who have made this pilgrimage to this sacred place, Alice Springs in the spirit of friendship, love and unity in one Church, our Catholic Church. I hope and seek that all people gathered here in Alice Springs this week, are able to open up their hearts, soul, subconscious and conscious minds to allow the great spirit of this country, Arrernte people's country and the convergence of the great presence of God almighty and the spirit of our late Pope John Paul and our new Pope Benedict 16th here at this special occasion to enter into each and every one of you. I would like to start by singing a song that I wrote; one that I feel is appropriate for this special event.

### **Song: 'The Holy Light' by Mark Bin Bakar**

*See the holy light  
Burning on its candle stick  
Calling in his name  
Born and raised a Catholic  
I hear the faint footsteps  
Its coming close to bay  
What did my fore fathers do wrong  
Why do I have to pay For your guiding light  
Shall lead me through my pain  
My Indigenous woes  
Given up to your domain  
The Papal lives in Rome  
The most highest of our church  
Please lord hear my prayers  
My spirit now will search  
See the holy light  
Bath in this holy light  
Feel the holy light  
Embrace this holy light  
See the holy light  
Burning on its candle stick  
Calling in his name  
Born and raised a Catholic*

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I had been asked, and so honourably accepted to speak to you all here today. This great honour has been bestowed onto me to speak in celebration of our Papal's visit twenty years ago from Rome to the red heart of our country. Our Pope; the most highest of our church. Any higher and I will be talking to God himself which can be done, by you and me, anytime, anyplace, anywhere. This is the passage to God. Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit and in the name of the Holy Father. Doing God's work.

Job 12:13 "With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding"

This assembly here has been titled "Dreaming from the Heart" so I eloquently call my speech today "Heart of the Dreaming". After all this is Central Australia and the late Pope John Paul chose this place for his visit to speak to Australia's Indigenous people on behalf of the church. Was this a political choice or a spiritual choice? I choose the latter, because regardless of

anything you do, or where you choose to do it in this country, the inclusion of Aboriginal and Islander people instantly becomes political. Our great Pope knew this, so the spiritual choice is one that makes sense to me, as this is the Heart of Indigenous Australia and the Church's way of reaching out to, quote our late Pope "Brothers and Sisters". His opening statement tells us how much our Church loves us and how much the Church wishes to assist us in our spiritual and material needs.

On behalf of all Catholics, and all Indigenous peoples throughout Australia, I would like to thank our late Holiness for the epic journey he made to come to Central Australia and talk to and about our Indigenous community. The fact that the highest member of our international church, chose to come to central Australia is a clear indication and calling for our Indigenous peoples to rise up, embrace God and continue to hold ourselves in high regard, and continue to practice our faith and Christianity, in whatever form, that embraces the teachings and understanding of Jesus Christ. Our late Pope has set precedence, in being a voice from the wilderness, raising awareness, compassion and empathy for our Indigenous people's plight. The work of God commenced 20 years ago, we as a nation are slow to activate within this country, but the longer it takes, the more it demonstrates our failure as a nation to rectify the condition of its Indigenous people's plight, whilst not listening, to the words of God through our late Pope. He was a true messenger of God. I thank your holiness for the inspiration, guidance and vision that you attempted to introduce to not just your flock but the many others, who need the wisdom and guidance that you brought with your presence in our Country, In Arrernte Country, In Indigenous Australia's Country, In God's Country.

When you go on the tours to see the great locations etc, feel the place with your heart and soul, and you will feel the wonder of creation and God's intentions for our people to be able to live out here or anywhere in isolated Australia. This great feeling is the feeling of the Dreaming, and what better place to be "Dreaming from the heart whilst going to the heart of the Dreaming". Close your eyes and feel it, it is the same thing. The journey of our late Pope! The title of my speech today! This gathering!

A common thread through it all tells me, and I am sure it tells you, that a great spiritual essence is present.

Our people have the natural inherited gift of being close to God through our spirituality. This spirituality is the tool that allows us to be at peace with God, and most importantly, ourselves and our extended families, all brothers and sisters of the human race. The Journey our Holiness made was consistent with Jesus and John the Baptist, their journey into the Deserts of the holy country, except the difference in this case is he travelled to Central Australia, the lands of the Arrernte People, the isolated city of Alice Springs where we gather here today. But, like all cities, take away the entire infrastructure and what do we have, we have the desert. The buildings are just a metaphor for the trials and tribulations of man, at times the devils work or haven, and at times temptations that can lead us into an abyss of darkness.

The Journey into the desert or bush is the closest place; where one can find the very essence of spiritual inspiration, despite the temptations; if one is in touch with ones deepest place, in the heart, the vessel of love, compassion and understanding. After all, how else could a people live out here, pre colonisation? This is the root of faith, belief and connection, the Oneness of a people that were given the silence and isolation to live in harmony and balance with nature herself. The greatest gift to be given; the ability to sustain, endure and survive in God's own world! A test of one's ability to have faith!

I had been nominated to speak here today as one of many Indigenous voices who may be able to present a speech that will and is inspired by our late Pope and Jesus Christ the greatest messenger of peace the world of man has ever known. I have never even thought of ever being bestowed such a privilege. Thank you to those people who nominated me to speak here today, I hope I can be a worthy servant. The spirit of God almighty is felt here today.

As Jesus said to his disciples in Mathew 18:20 "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"

The vehicle to God is the many different religions throughout the world, I happen to be sitting on the Catholic Bus by Birth and by choice. My father is a Singaporean Muslim, my Mother an Aboriginal Irish Catholic. An interesting combination considering the politics of religion today! Imagine the conversations, discussions and traits that have carved me into who I am today.

As a young boy, despite being Catholic, I grew up in a mixed world of religions, cultures, languages and foods. Being a child of the Kimberley, growing up in Broome I learnt the appreciation of the above. The gift of human differences and the respect of these differences that make up the wonder of man! The greatest gift given to us by God the almighty; "the ability to show respect and show compassion"! Also, funnily enough, I have even found myself in a fascinating career option.

Ecclesiastes 1:17 "I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly" This trait is a combination of two powerful forces that give me the skill, gift and passion to stand here today and talk to you in celebration and recognition of our late great Pope John Paul the 2nd. His speech, presence and memory are one of these great forces. The upbringing, teachings and spiritual guidance of the Catholic church and all its messengers that have crossed paths with me in time over my living years. The second force is also the greatest and oldest culture, belief and spiritual essence: my Aboriginal Culture.

This is so recognised in his Holiness' speech back in 1986. The unification, celebration and recognition of Aboriginal culture, religion and beliefs that flow in parallel to the teachings of our Church! The very same Church that brings us here together, in celebration of the almighty one! The very same force of the Aboriginal people's identity! The recognition of his Holiness of our Indigenous Australians place in this country before European occupation and the thousands of years that have past us by whilst we lived in perfect harmony, balance and Christian ethos in a naturally beautiful state, is the indication of the greatness of his Holiness and the words scribed by God through his senior messenger, Our Pope.

The Spirit of God has always been with us and with every other race, culture throughout the world. Our "Dreaming", which he recognised, the very essence that influenced our lives so strongly in which we remain as Aboriginal people of this country. The mystery of God, his spirit in us then and now, and creation remain the very fundamental tools to carry us through to eternity to be seated at the right hand of God.

I quote the Wisdom of Solomon 1:7 "The Spirit of the Lord filleth the world".

His Holiness went on in recognition by saying that we as the first people of this land have a connection to this country, this land and the isolation and silence, which was the very tool that bought us very close to God and his intentions of a very balanced people with a very balanced society which evolved for thousands of years. The laws, language, place and belonging that we inherited over thousands of years was the very governing rules that allowed us to be in purer oneness with ourselves, the land and the heavens. Our dreaming stories that talked about the great one, creation and human spirit. This is an ancient natural gift that also goes back before Jesus the Son of God walked among us here on this earth. This is the recognised will of God. What a great family I come from.

Corinthians 15:10 "I am what I am"

Ecclesiastes 1:4 "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever"

His Holiness stated quote "Certainly whatever is done, cannot be undone. But what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday, must not be put off until tomorrow", Pope John

Paul 2nd 1986.

This statement calls out and will always call out into the future and will continue to gain significance the further away we get into the future from the time it was said and our country has not acted upon those great words of wisdom and guidance – will tomorrow ever come, for our Indigenous Brothers and Sisters of Australia, past and present? Only time will tell.

Our Prime Minister acknowledged the greatness of the visit by our Holiness twenty years ago, the dates and the years he recollects, however, sadly, he did not quote or acknowledge the Pope's message to Australia. This is the typical oppressive attitude that has demonstrated the total arrogance and respect for the first Australians, the Indigenous peoples of Australia. At times I feel to their misfortune, that they are not aware of, or recognize their own ignorance, which alludes to ones intolerant attitudes.

If our Holiness could not persuade a leader of this country to think and understand its own flock then what hope has the sheep but to the slaughter. The lack of continuity of Governments where the famous Redfern speech inspired many Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and stimulated a new aspiration for reconciliation and ownership of Australia's history does not even enter into the next regime.

We call out for mainstream Australia and Australian Governments and people of Government to contribute to a greater healing by owning the wrong doings of the past, claiming History, warts and all. The many religions and in particular, our religion today, cannot do it alone. Collectively, as one united Australia, despite religious differences, cultural differences, racial differences, Black or White, we can do it, together.

We can change our country nationally and internationally and most importantly, we can demonstrate to God the almighty that we are great and that his teachings and guidance is the true salvation to a common component of mankind, the ability to love, trust and respect.

Esdras 4:46 "What is past I know, but what is for to come, I know not"

Native title is a process that must continue to recognise and empower the right people of this country. This should never be seen as a threat to mainstream Australia as it is sometimes painted as. Native Title is about recognition of the diversity of Indigenous Australia and the justifiable right to negotiate in a time after the fact. It is a tool to heal and give right people dignity back of their beginning. After all, the blood and bones of their ancestors is in their own ground.

But at the same time, greed and neglect towards the Stolen Generation people should not occur, as this is not the Aboriginal way, we must not stoop to a level that creates a subculture of our own people, enforced not only by Government policy and ignorance, but at times by our very selves in the way we achieve and gain Native Title by ostracising our fellow countrymen.

Proverbs 15:27 "He who is greedy for unjust gain makes trouble for his household"

**Song: 'Coroboree People' by Mark Bin Bakar**

*Dreaming and thinking bout the good old days  
When tea, flour and sugar was our only pay  
Things were happening much to fast  
Old people dying they just could not last  
They expected us to change over night they say  
But Rome was not built, in one day  
We are the Corroboree People*

*We are the children of a very old race  
We are the Corroboree children  
And we don't know any other way  
Every day we'd work so hard  
Building and cleaning another mans yard  
Times were changing so was history  
Our children were taken and we'd watch with sympathy  
This was the law, the law of the times  
Perhaps we should forget and tow the line  
We are the Corroboree People  
We are the children of a very old race  
We are the Corroboree children  
And we don't know any other way  
Well times have come and times have gone  
And the memories still live on  
We cannot change our way of living  
It's been that way since the beginning  
This is a fable of our daily lives  
Of what we have to live through, this life  
We are the Corroboree People  
We are the children of a very old race  
We are the Corroboree children  
And we don't know any other way*

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The failure of our society to prevent Domestic Violence and abuse of our children needs the strength first and foremost of our people and members of our community to up-hold the holy right to protect the innocent. We, as a community, must be strong to up-hold the law of God and the Law of society. As members of our society we must be vigilant and not turn a blind eye to Justice and the right thing to do.

As quoted in Psalms 127:3 "Children are an heritage of the Lord"

The illusive apology that was to assist Indigenous Australians and Australians in general into a great period of healing and reconciliation has now fallen by the way side as not even the present leader or Government of Australia could salvage a true humane and holy status in this life time or possibly even scratch the anvil of sincerity. Some could say the Devil's work is done.

Proverbs 29:18 "Where there is no vision, the people will perish"

Our great Pope said in his speech that we are to stay united, as we are like a tree standing in the middle of a bush fire, the leaves scorched and the tough bark is scarred and burnt, but inside the tree the sap is still flowing, and under the ground the roots are still strong. Like that tree, we have endured the flames and we still have the power to be reborn. And here I call all Catholics and Australians to march together to allow that tree to become green again and to have fruit and prosper as we cannot do it ourselves; we need you all to raise your hearts to the sky and become reborn and healed. Our God is a great God and he can allow anything to happen if we are willing to hear his calling and his wishes. Psalms 48:14 "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death"

But I do have faith in the future generations to do the right thing and carry out the correct steps to assist us in retaining our dignity as Indigenous Australians. I have faith the many caring Non Indigenous Australians who wish to see Justice, care and compassion finally rewarded to the original caretakers of this great country. Yes I have Faith. Like the faith handed to us by our late Pope and the leadership he gave to the world. Or most importantly

the great speech he made to the Australian community here in Alice Spring in 1986.

11 Corinthians 5:7 "We walk by faith, not by sight"

A common supremacy exist in our daily lives, it is not black it is not white it is not one religion over another. It is not a different culture being superior to another. There is only one thing superior to white or black supremacy, if we as human beings have faith in one supremacy and one supremacy only, regardless of what religion or cultural differences and that is the Supremacy of God almighty, our Creator.

I quote Steven Biko (1946-1977) South African activist, leader of the Black Consciousness Movement.

White people must be made to realise that they are only human, not superior. Same with Black people, we must be made to realise that we are also human, not inferior. Twenty years has elapsed since our Pope came, left and then ascended into heaven to be seated by God. He asked for a rebirth in 86.

- Since then the abolishment of ATSIC has had profound confusion for our people and the struggle is now even greater, however the aspirations and dreams of our people are not shattered. We still continue in isolation and all we have is our families, our children and our old people to hold our place in this country, as we are used to being last in line and treated as secondary class people. We've had generations of it, it is now a culture that we have even been born into, but hopefully change is coming;

- Some Indigenous people across the country are receiving justice in the way of land title claims and we can only hope that this is a prediction of better things to come for our Indigenous people. Just recently the Nyoongar people of WA won a very important case for the recognition that they are the first people of Perth, congratulations, a first of any capital city in Australia, a historical claim. Governments are reeling with appealing considerations, the umpire's decision is never left alone when it is in Indigenous peoples favour, but regardless it gives a bit more confidence in a movement of rebirth;

- Recently Catholic Nuns have welcomed the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement which says, the plight of Indigenous Australians is still the most pressing issue in Australia today. The statement calls for a justly reconciled Australia. It is the same message given by Pope John Paul II to the people of Alice Springs 20 years ago. The Josephite order is calling on all Nuns to unite in their efforts to help Indigenous communities deal with health and cultural issues. They say the Church has a responsibility to act and make amends for past failures. They say that they have been part of the systematic breakdown of our culture, they see it as their responsibility to listen to us, to sit at our feet and for us to say what we need, to help us reclaim our culture. A statement of the potential attitudes towards a rebirth;

As much as it may seem doom and gloom, it is not, as we have the greatest means of overcoming all things. That is faith. Faith in our Church, faith in our fellow man, faith in Australia to finally open its heart as a nation, and faith in God to engineer this process. We rejoice in the hope of God's gift of salvation.

Out late Pope called on us to remember the past, to be faithful to our worthy traditions, and to adapt our living culture wherever it is needed for our own needs and those of our fellow man. We are called to open our hearts to the consoling, purifying and uplifting message of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died so that we might all have life, and have it to the full.

Psalms 16:6 "Yea, I have a goodly heritage"

In wrapping up I call on everyone to think about the great visit by his Holiness and its

significance to us as a nation, Australia, but also nations within one nation, you and me and all Indigenous peoples of Australia. I commend this speech inspired by our late Popes speech in 1986 into the depths of my Church and into my country in the hope it will inspire, teach and stimulate debate. Most importantly into our White and Indigenous Youth to take up the fight to heal this country, in the name of Good and in the name of God. I can assure you God will guide you, if you open up your hearts and allow him in.

The Dreaming in your hearts is the Heart of the Dreaming. We can rebirth, lets rebirth in true brotherhood, sisterhood, as one big family in the name of our Church and in the name of Australia. Let's unite and show the world that our country is a true compassionate country when it comes to our Indigenous peoples. Lets pay Homage as a nation to a great man of God, his words and his wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ. God bless you all.

I would like to close my session by singing one last song for you.

**Song: 'A Leader' by Mark Bin Bakar**

As a child I grew up, in a word of superstition  
Thinking that the dark was all evil  
I saw things that could not be explained  
Then I realised, it was just in my head  
As I grew older, I learnt of a small boy  
A small child born to be king  
Something was special about this child  
Cause men came from afar  
A leader, he was a leader  
Of love and peace, and humanity  
An example, to all mankind  
The son of God, and the prince of peace  
Now I'm much older, I understand  
This little boy, was a holy man  
He taught us to love one another  
And to share the good things in life  
He died on the cross for you and me  
He gave his life for our eternity  
It is written in the book of love  
It is written in the book of life  
A leader, he was a leader  
Of love and peace, and humanity  
An example, to all mankind  
The son of God, and the prince of peace

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Please travel home safely.

End.