

Sunday 14 November, 2021

Sermon given by the Revd Canon Glen Loughrey on the occasion of his installation as Canon of the Cathedral and Artist-in-Residence.

'A New Creation'

+ In the name of the God of Holy Dreaming, and of Jesus Christ our elder and of the Creator Spirit. Amen.

I have a dream, synonymous with Martin Luther King Jr., is also my theme this morning.

I have a dream, a new creation. In our reading from Revelations we read, "See, I am making all things new." This is not about making that which is not us new, it is not about making those who are not us new. It is about making us, those within God's economy of the kin-dom new. It is about we as the body of Christ in the world, individually and corporately being re-created - re-existed as the fullness of Creation's dream.

(Later) Today I am being installed as a Canon of this Cathedral as Artist in Residence, but I am also the first of the original people of this land to be such. This simple fact makes it a terrible privilege. Why? Firstly, being the first means that many before me never had the opportunity or it just wasn't in the imaginary of the Church to believe it possible. It also suggests that I am an exception to what is possible for my people, that somehow, we had to wait 141 years until the right one came along!

Secondly, it calls me to live custodially in two places, speaking truth to power to build a relationship of responsibility and reciprocity. This is not a comfortable fit. It never has been yet living as Voice and presence seems to be what is called for, no matter what it may cost.

Here is a coming together of the ancient presence in this place and the faith of those who colonized it. It involves a de-linking from the coloniality of those celebrated in this building, of the converso (conversion from savage to human) inherent in the Western European Christianity and its engagement with the original peoples throughout the world, and the connection my church has as a partner in the annexing of this place.

There is need for a re-existing of the deep, sophisticated, and nuanced wisdom and kinship the people who were here before developed over 65,000 years and continue to maintain to this day, particularly in this place, the Wurrundjeri people and across the Diocese the Bunurong and Wathawurrung people and the continuing custodians of land in the Anglican Province of Victoria.

It requires a de-linking from the universal and the re-existence of the particular. A de-linking from that which was brought here by the Western colonizers, a product of coloniality commencing some 500 years ago and remaining present today. It requires the re-existing of that which has always been here, the ancient wisdom, language, dreaming of the many peoples who inhabited this island we now call Australia.

I take my dream from the dream Jesus articulates throughout the various Gospel accounts, a dream of justice for the marginalized and the other, freedom from the reach of the colonial matrix of power in both State, church (synagogue) and knowledge (scribes) and the possibility of equity and hope in all things. Jesus, a man of two countries did indeed understand the difficulty of bringing together the two places in which he was steeped - the country of his Father in heaven and of his mother as expressed in the genealogy we see in Matthew. He lived in this place faithful to the language, wisdom and truth of both places and remained faithful to both until he returned to disturb the colonial imaginary and be rebirthed in the life and practice of those who saw him clearly.

My dream is about a new creation, a doing of a new thing. This will involve decoloniality - the challenging of the coloniality/modernity intimacy that is the foundation of the Church in this place. It is about unpacking the symbols, language, and knowledge we use to maintain the power here. It is about engaging with and clearly hearing the voices of those whose land this is, and preferencing their knowledge, wisdom, and language in all that we do in this place.

I stand here as Blackfella's Youngfella while and as part of my mother's English heritage. As a child I used to live on top of the Great Dividing Range and was able to see to the east and to the west. The water, as it ran down the range, went two ways although it was water from the same source in both streams. Seeing two ways is my life. In this place of St Paul's Cathedral, I dream of bringing together both ways of thinking and believing so this becomes a sacred space for the old and the new.

I dream of that time when the local people can come in here and do ceremony, not on special occasions or on invitation, but because this is theirs as well as the church's.

I dream of the time when we do not think that Jesus' preferences one way of believing or thinking over another and allow this to truly be a central sacred space in this city.

I dream that the windows commissioned for the narthex screen will call all who enter here to refocus their vision to see and embrace the truth that they are on someone else's land, and we are to embrace, in the various places we return in this country, the way of seeing of those ancient peoples. They are not just about this place. The windows are to be symbolic of the de-linking and re-existing we need to do wherever we are in this land.

I dream that instead of seeing us just as ancient, traditional, or used to be people we are recognized as and have always been, contemporary people, the continuing custodians, the sovereign 'owners' (for want of a better word") of this land. That we excel in your culture, language, knowledge systems and more, as well as ours shows clearly, we are not less than you or just the exotic other. We are more than a deficit people, we are in fact the enough people, if not the surplus people. We do not need to be assimilated or converted, simply respected, and included.

I am wearing a possum skin stole made by my friend Marilyn, a stole that has undergone ceremony performed by Auntie Kim on country at Healesville. For me this symbolizes the new creation - it brings together the Anglican liturgical stole with a form of the possum skin cloak and reminds me that I am in this place on behalf of the ancestors of both ways of being. This means I am to balance my allegiance to my two countries just as Jesus balance his allegiance to his father's country and his mother's country. This I know will

be misunderstood, misinterpreted, and perhaps violently opposed by some on both sides of the Great Divide, hopefully not to the point of crucifixion.

Jesus of the Gospels calls us to stand against coloniality in whatever form it is materialized, economic, gender, race, religion, and de-link ourselves from our role in its maintenance. Jesus calls us all to re-exist the deep truths present in creation wherever and in whoever it is found. Jesus calls us to recognize the sacredness in place and language and to relinquish our desire for power and control over both.

It is my dream that today is the beginning of that process in this place, not because of me, but because people had the vision to make this possible and that you are all here to witness is beginning.

As revelations reminds us: "See, I am making all things new." Amen