27/05/2024

Message from Archbishop Makarios of Australia for National Reconciliation Week



Twenty-four years ago, a grand march across the Harbour Bridge in the city of Sydney established the tradition of National Reconciliation Week. Tens of thousands of people from various cultural backgrounds joined their steps and voices to proclaim the need for a more profound reconciliation of the Australian Nation, particularly between the broader Australian society and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It was the culmination of a journey that had been unfolding continuously, with smaller or larger steps, especially during the second half of the 20th century. Key milestones include the abolition of a series of discriminatory practices with the referendum of 27 May 1967, and the recognition of land rights for First Nations peoples with the High Court decision of 3 June 1992.

At the dawn of the 21st century, Australian society had already significantly moved away from the mistakes and injustices of the past. Simultaneously, it had realised that the destination of absolute reconciliation required more dedication and

systematic action, focusing on the rapprochement of communities, deepening their relationships, and further cultivating the spirit of mutual respect. National Reconciliation Week serves and continues to serve this purpose, annually inviting us to learn about the history of the Australian Nation, the culture of the First Peoples and our shared achievements; to come closer together, set aside prejudices, and invest in what unites us.

This is a challenge that aligns with our Christian values and the mandates of the holy Gospel. As Orthodox Christians, we have a duty to treat our fellow human beings with respect and love, without discrimination, to steadfastly defend what is good and just, to tear down the walls of separation and division, and to build bridges of friendship and fellowship.

With these thoughts, I ask and pray that we remain committed to the principles of our faith, bearing good witness to Australian society and contributing, whenever possible and in every appropriate way, our own stone to the noble edifice of the reconciliation of the Australian Nation.