



THE Catholic Aboriginal Leadership TEAM

SPIRITUALITY STATEMENT

We, the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team (CALT) of the Northern Territory, would like to acknowledge that our lands were made by our loving God. As members of the Catholic Church we gather as one people dedicated to Christ and the Gospel. Our vision is to share Christ-like leadership in our schools and to grow our young people who are strong in identity, strong in faith, strong in culture and strong in learning. We promote the integration of faith and culture, so that each tradition reinforces the other, rather than replaces.

The Catholic Church is welcoming of all cultures and has been influenced by the ways that the love of God is expressed differently throughout the world. In the Northern Territory, The Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team uses the four symbols of shell, water, sand and smoke to express our cultural Catholic practices. These symbols are our connection to land and to God.

Shells are used in Wadeye to remind us that our Loving God gave us ears for listening. Grandparents bless the newborn children's ears with shells so they will listen to the good things their parents want to teach them. We bless them so our young people will listen to their Elders who want to teach them about their tribal group, land, their totems, dance group and language. God made the shells and we use them to honour God and to bless our ears so we will become one people with our Creator. The blessing of ears is also part of the Catholic rite of Baptism.

Water is used in Nauiyu as a symbol of life, and we know God to be the source of all life. Water is used in our ceremonies to symbolise safe passage through the land. It heals and reconnects our spirits to the land. It is also the symbol used in Baptism for God to welcome us into God's family within the Catholic Church. Water is used to welcome you to both the church community and the land.

The red sand of Central Australia is used to remind us of the missionaries who came and introduced the Gospel to us. It is a reminder of the Catholic Church's instrumental role in obtaining the land that the Ltyentye Apurte community now occupies. As God did for Moses and the Israelites thousands of years ago, so too, God brought us to our promised land that is both life-giving and safe, where we continue to live, prosper and worship.

The leaves from the Ironwood tree, native to the Tiwi Islands, provide the smoke. The tree created by God provides us with a cleansing of our bodies, heals us and renews us to begin our new journey. A smoking ceremony honours and cleanses those who gather for ritual and worship. A traditional smoking ceremony can also be used to bless precious objects, such as the altar, place of the Word, and the Cross at the beginning of Mass¹. God's people have always used incense and smoke as a means of cleansing, healing and blessing and our Catholic church continues this practice today during various liturgies.

We invite all who join our Aboriginal Catholic Communities to walk gently with us on this journey. Just as the Communion of Saints accompany us, so too do our Ancestors who are part of this Communion of Saints. God is with us and with our Ancestors, especially in our sacred spaces; we are called to respect and honour Ancestors and our Countries.

In the same way as we seek the guidance and protection of the saints through prayer, we too, call out to our Ancestors seeking their guidance and protection. When the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team call out on Country, we are acknowledging our Ancestors of the lands we are visiting.

We welcome you into our Aboriginal Catholic Communities. We invite you to understand, respect and appreciate the spiritual weaving of God's mission and plan in our communities. We know that in "God we live and move and have our being"². We pray your journey within our lands will strengthen your connection with God. As we the Catholic Aboriginal Leadership Team know that God brings all peoples and cultures to the 'fullness of life'³.

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¹ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Commission (NATSICC)

² Acts 17:28

³ John 10:10