



**Edmund Rice Centre**

Awareness. Advocacy. Action

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## **ERC JUSTICE UPDATES**

### **March 2021 No.42**

Dear All,

Welcome to the 42nd Edition of ERC Justice Updates your regular newsletter from the Edmund Rice Centre, on all sorts of matters relating to human rights, first nations and environmental justice.

In this topsy, turvy world we live in with multiple crises affecting us all and with each new day bringing more and more challenges; let us never forget the vulnerable and forgotten people who have no one to advocate and care for them. In remembering them let us reflect on the words of Maya Angelou:

**My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour and some style. *Maya Angelou***

**My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humour and some style. *Maya Angelou***

As always please send us anything you would like included in Justice Updates. Your suggestions and comments both positive and negative or indeed any information that you would like to disseminate amongst the wider Edmund Rice Network - it is all much appreciated.

Don't forget to forward Justice Updates onto anyone or let me know their email address and I will subscribe them.

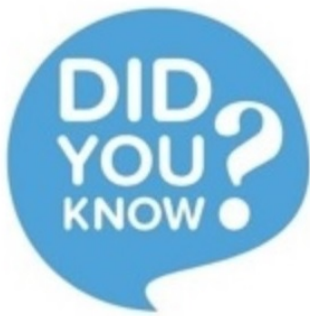
Previous editions are available at <https://www.erc.org.au/newsletters>

Peace

Marita

Communications Project Officer,  
Marita McInerney

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that there may be articles in this publication with names and images of deceased people.*



*On Friday 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2021, the Australian Government will have detained men & women on Nauru & Manus Island/Port Moresby for 2772 days.*



In an article entitled: *'Feminism needs to oppose neoliberal economics to move forward,'* in Pearls & Irritations Eva Cox collects data from "the burst of media and organisational interest in women each year around March 8th International Women's Day. They illustrate many of the continuing inequities that need to be addressed."

- *In the Australian Work & Family Policy Roundtable Report - 17 academics report 'The crisis in care and employment has had an immediate and negative impact on gender equality and wellbeing in Australia, raising widespread concern about the shadow pandemics of domestic violence, mental illness and substance abuse.'*

- Alison Preston speaking at a conference in WA in October 2020 reports: Australia has dropped from 15th in 2006 to 44th in 2020 in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report.
- Structural inequalities in the Australian labour force show that although women make up 48% of the workforce they are over-represented (68%) in part-time work.
- The ACTU listed the following: \* 4% pay gap, \* Women still bear primary responsibility for caring, when reduced number hours worked due to caring - gender pay gap is 30%; \*Australian workforce is highly gender- segregated. Equal pay for equal work embedded in Federal law over 50years ago has not moved in 30years.
- The Gratten report stated: Data shows there were 40,000 fewer women with bachelor degrees employed in November 2020 than at beginning of 2020 - whereas the trend for men went in the opposite direction.
- Australian university leaders are nearly 3 times more likely to be men than women. Of 37 Chancellors 10 (27%) are women & 27 (73%) are men.
- Politicians: In Federal Government less than 20% of Coalition MP's are women compared to 42% of Labor MP's. In Senate 42% for Coalition and 60% for Labor. Nationally 25% of Liberal MP's at all levels of government are female, 17.5% are National, compared to 44% of Labor MP's. In Upper Houses 33% Liberal, 50% Labor & 47% Nationals.



## The biggest step yet in Truth Telling about Australia's history since colonisation

***Paul Wright, Pearls & Irritations, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2021***

*Focus has rightly been on the very serious issues of sexual violence that have been raised regarding the Federal Parliament and historically with the Attorney-General, Christian Porter. However, there is already a risk that the profound importance of what has been announced in Victoria this week by the [First Peoples Assembly](#) and the State government – the [Yoo-rrook Justice Commission](#) – which will be the most comprehensive Truth Telling process in Australia since colonisation began in 1788, might be missed.*

Truth Telling Commissions are not new. Most famously in post-Apartheid South Africa under Nelson Mandela's first unity government, and more recently in Canada with its documenting 'the history and legacy' of that country's [notorious residential schools system](#)', Truth Telling Commissions have been hugely important processes for both First Nations and settler communities.

There have been previous Royal Commissions in Australia which have tentatively lifted the rock on some of the systemic abuses and crimes perpetrated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is now

three decades since the [Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#) which brought to light the shameful treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system. Treatment that leads to over-representation in prisons and the subsequent deaths of more than 450 First Nations Peoples under the 'care' of the State. The deaths continue.

The [Bringing them Home Report](#) by the Australian Human Rights Commission in 1997 gave voice to many of the thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that had been systematically stolen from their families and placed in state institutions or adopted out to non-Indigenous families (often into indentured servitude). The heartbreaking truth of what had happened across Australia for 90-plus years eventually led to the Apology made to the Stolen Generations in 2008 by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

These have been specific inquiries that have looked at the impact and implications of state policies made in relation to First Nations Peoples that have caused immeasurable hurt and harm, causing generational trauma and producing well-documented gaps in life outcomes from life expectancy and child mortality rates to incarceration rates and disparities in employment and education.

However, there has never been a root and branch, broad, historic and standing mechanism to comprehensively reveal the complete histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and how they have been treated and impacted by colonisation over the last 230 years.

Why is this so important?

Despite institutional best efforts to hide, obscure or deny what has happened, the truth of dispossession, massacres, disease, removal, racism and rights-denial has continued to find its way out into the light. Increasingly, non-Indigenous Australians have been open and willing to learn more about what actually happened and have recognised that this is a necessary process in reconciliation. In fact, reconciliation is impossible without Truth Telling.

The Australian War Memorial will not acknowledge the tens of thousands of indigenous people who died in the Frontier Wars defending their own land.

Knowing that the Truth is irrepressible and undeniable in the end, the importance of Truth Telling processes that are endorsed and supported by our governments is two-fold:



Read More:

<https://johnmenadue.com/the-biggest-step-yet-in-truth-telling-about-australias-history-since-colonisation/>



*Aboriginal people are told to forgive and forget, but is that expectation reasonable, asks Stan Grant. (ABC: Mitchell Woolnough)*

## **After the Yoo-rrook Truth and Justice Commission, Aboriginal people are not obliged to forgive**

**Stan Grant, [www.abc.net.au/news](http://www.abc.net.au/news), 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Who owns truth? And who gets to decide when or how truth is told?

These are fundamental questions Victorians are going to face as they begin a [process of truth and justice as part of treaty negotiations](#) with the Indigenous community.

The [Yoo-rrook Justice Commission](#) has been praised as an important step to facing up to a brutal history. But is it?

It is certainly a long overdue opportunity for Aboriginal people to tell the truth of massacre and rape and theft of land and segregation and exploitation and stolen children and broken families.

It is also a chance to tell the powerful story of pride and survival and resilience.

These will be hard truths: hard to tell and no doubt hard to hear.

These truths should be allowed to stand on their own terms. Yet already there are attempts to massage the truth, to blunt the sharp edge — to make the truth more palatable.

We have gone quickly from truth to healing. What happened to anger? What happened to resentment? Are Aboriginal people not entitled to their anger? Can they not tell the truth without worrying about whether it hurts white feelings?

Why does a treaty depend on healing? It is a political settlement that should acknowledge the unceded sovereignty of First Nations people, make restitution for the past, build a stronger future with a robust economic base for Indigenous communities.

It should not come with the proviso of healing.

In any case, surely these are things for the Victorian Aboriginal communities to work through. They are the ones who should decide when or if they are ready for healing.

### **Anger makes us uncomfortable**

Society doesn't like anger. It lauds forgiveness and forgetting. It wants us all to "move on". It is a hallmark of Western liberal democracies for whom the past is often an inconvenience, something to be "dealt with".

Reconciliation is prioritised, even above justice. As philosopher Thomas Brudholm says:

***"When societies try to "move on" after mass atrocity, victims who cannot or will not abide with the call to forgive and reconcile are often pictured as 'prisoners of the past'."***

Read More:

[https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-14/yoorrook-truth-justice-reconciliation-treaty-victoria-forgive/13239136?utm\\_source=sfmc%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&utm\\_medium=email%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_newsmail\\_am\\_sfmc%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&utm\\_term=%E2%80%8B&utm\\_id=1575578%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&sfmc\\_id=90118442&fbclid=IwAR0XrG36CSFUW5oX\\_dc7yduJaYgD](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-03-14/yoorrook-truth-justice-reconciliation-treaty-victoria-forgive/13239136?utm_source=sfmc%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&utm_medium=email%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&utm_campaign=abc_news_newsmail_am_sfmc%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&utm_term=%E2%80%8B&utm_id=1575578%E2%80%8B%E2%80%8B&sfmc_id=90118442&fbclid=IwAR0XrG36CSFUW5oX_dc7yduJaYgD)



Gunnai Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung woman and Green senator for Victoria, Lidia Thorpe, has criticised Scott Morrison for failing to agree to meet with the families bereaved by Indigenous deaths in custody. Photograph: Darrian Traynor/Getty Images

## **'When will we have peace?' Grief and outrage at three Indigenous deaths in custody in a week**

Lorena Allen, The Guardian, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021

***As an inquest handed down findings into a death three years ago, more families were left bereaved, prompting fresh calls for reforms***

### **“When will we have peace?”**

That was the Greens senator and Gunnai Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung woman Lidia Thorpe’s anguished question on Friday after the news that three Aboriginal people had died in custody in the space of a week.

In New South Wales, a man in his 30s and a woman in her 50s died in custody. Their deaths were [only revealed under questioning](#) during a state parliamentary hearing five days ago.

News of the third death, of an Aboriginal man in Victoria’s Ravenhall



correctional centre last Sunday, broke as the findings of a coronial inquest into the prison death of another Aboriginal man were being handed down in Sydney.

A 36-year-old Anaiwan Dunhutti man, Nathan Reynolds, died in 2018 gasping for air on a prison floor from an asthma attack after guards took an “unreasonably” long time to come to his aid.

The NSW deputy coroner Elizabeth Ryan said the “[confused, uncoordinated and unreasonably delayed](#)” response by prison guards and health staff deprived Reynolds of “at least some chance” of survival.

Reynolds’ family, who have waited almost three years for answers as to how and why he died – and, crucially, for somebody to be held responsible – heard the NSW deputy coroner give a brief summary of her findings on Thursday.

“These failures were due both to numerous system deficiencies and to individual errors of judgment,” Ryan said. It had taken more than 11 minutes for the guards to arrive, 13 minutes for a nurse to be summoned, 22 minutes before she arrived at his side and 47 minutes before ambulance paramedics attended him, she said.

But Ryan said her recommendations were “not focused on attributing blame”. They were made “in the hope” that people like Reynolds, who enter custody with severe asthma, will have a better chance of avoiding a life-threatening attack, and of surviving one should it happen.

Read More:

[https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/14/when-will-we-have-peace-grief-and-outrage-at-three-indigenous-deaths-in-custody-in-a-week?utm\\_term=bbaa060a79d619929d836a3bc2356c16&utm\\_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/mar/14/when-will-we-have-peace-grief-and-outrage-at-three-indigenous-deaths-in-custody-in-a-week?utm_term=bbaa060a79d619929d836a3bc2356c16&utm_campaign=GuardianTodayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email)



***Thanush Selvarasa***

**Eyes on Offshore Facebook, 12<sup>th</sup> March**

I did not realize the value when I painted a mural of Jesus Christ and mother Mary's for a rural church on Manus Island.

Several years after donating the painting of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary, I received a phone call from the Catholic Priest. It was really surprising because the Priest still remembers me.

He told me that, whenever he goes to Church and look at the painting the first thing that comes to his mind is my face. He really appreciated and blessed me over the phone call.

After the phone call, I imagined the day that I went to the rural Church first time. The Church building was built during the 2nd WW and it had not been renovated or repaired since it was built. I'm coming from a Hindu family but I had no issues to go to Church because I strongly believe all the Religions teach the same thing.

First when I enter the Church building I very firstly saw the damaged portrait of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary. And seeing the damaged portrait of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary made me very sad and I asked myself why its been damaged and not been painted a new portrait.

Then I went to see a local man and asked him why its not been painted. Then came to know that the portrait had been used since 2nd WW and its been damaged for long time. He told me that, the local community do not have any support and funds to get a new portrait.

I decided to paint a new painting for the Church then, but its not easy to get the necessary painting equipment and paints nevertheless I decided to do the painting. I had no choice but to paint this portrait and donate to the Church.

I waited till the prayers come to an end to get the permission from the Catholic Priest. He accepted my offer to donate the painting with a smiling face. With his blessings I started to paint. I told him that it will take few week as its bit difficult to get the needful things.

I had very difficult times to get materials necessary for the painting. At one stage I was very stressed and wanted to give up on painting as I thought I won't be able to paint because I couldn't get what I needed, however I eventually managed to get the things and I succeeded in completing the mural for the church.

I believe that the local community and the Priest were grateful when I donated the portrait of Jesus Christ and Mother Mary.

I did not realize at the time that I have done something useful for the community; but today I really feel proud of myself for what I have done.

Read Thanush profile:

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100014938968043>



**Minor deported to New Zealand under Australian program Peter Dutton described as 'taking the trash out'**

***Calla Wahlquist, The Guardian, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021***

***Jacinda Ardern, who says she 'never agreed with the policy', is seeking more information about the 15-year-old***

Australian authorities deported a minor to New Zealand as part of a program home affairs minister [Peter Dutton](#) described as "taking the trash out".

The New Zealand prime minister, [Jacinda Ardern](#), confirmed that one of the people deported from Australia earlier this month was under the age of 18, but said she was not aware of any further details about the case.

The [15-year-old was deported](#) under the controversial scheme which the Australian government uses to deport non-citizens determined to have a “substantial criminal record” under the character test in section 501 of the Australian Migration Act.

Ardern has repeatedly criticised Australia for using the law to deport [New Zealand](#) citizens who are long-term residents of Australia.

She told reporters on Monday that she had sought further information to make sure the child’s case was handled appropriately.

“I’ve only just become aware that ... within the group of 501s that we had returned recently that there was what we would consider to be a minor in that group,” she said. “Of course we would have an expectation that regardless of the background that we do treat minors in a particular way when we’re dealing with deportation.”

Ardern said New Zealand had “never agreed with the policy”. She said she had not spoken to Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, about the issue and had not scheduled a call to do so, saying: “We actually don’t tend to schedule calls.”

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Dutton’s description of deportation flights as “taking the trash out” [caused a political furore in New Zealand](#), with the foreign minister, Nania Mahuta, saying Dutton’s remarks “only serve to trash his own reputation” and were “a reflection on his own character”.

The department of home affairs refused to confirm whether one of the recent deportees was under the age of 18, but said that the visa of a non-citizen “must be cancelled” if they are either serving a full-time term of imprisonment or have ever been sentenced to a period of at least 12 months imprisonment, “regardless of their age or nationality”.

Read full article:





Pope Francis meets with religious leaders of the three Abrahamic religions during an inter-religious meeting in Ur, during his

Apostolic Journey to Iraq. Image: Vatican News

## APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO IRAQ

[5-8 March 2021]

### **INTERRELIGIOUS MEETING**

*Plain of Ur*

*Saturday, 6 March 2021*

### **ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS**

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

This blessed place brings us back to our origins, to the sources of God's work, to the birth of our religions. Here, where Abraham our father lived, we seem to have returned home. It was here that Abraham heard God's call; it was from here that he set out on a journey that would change history. We are the fruits of that call and that journey. God asked Abraham to raise his eyes to heaven and to count its stars (cf. *Gen 15:5*). In those stars, he saw the promise of his descendants; he saw us. Today we, Jews, Christians and Muslims, together with our brothers and sisters of other religions, honour our father Abraham by doing as he did: *we look up to heaven and we journey on earth.*



*We look up to heaven.* Thousands of years later, as we look up to the same sky, those same stars appear. They illumine the darkest nights because they shine *together*. Heaven thus imparts a message of unity: the Almighty above invites us never to separate ourselves from our neighbours. The *otherness* of God points us towards *others*, towards our brothers and sisters. Yet if we want to preserve fraternity, we must not lose sight of heaven. May we – the descendants of Abraham and the representatives of different religions – sense that, above all, we have this role: to help our brothers and sisters to raise their eyes and prayers to heaven. We all need this because we are not self-sufficient. Man is not omnipotent; we cannot make it on our own. If we exclude God, we end up worshiping the things of this earth. Worldly goods, which lead so many people to be unconcerned with God and others, are not the reason why we journey on earth. We raise our eyes to heaven in order to raise ourselves from the depths of our vanity; we serve God in order to be set free from enslavement to our egos, because God urges us to love. This is true religiosity: to worship God and to love our neighbour. In today's world, which often forgets or presents distorted images of the Most High, believers are called to bear witness to his goodness, to show his paternity through our fraternity.

From this place, where faith was born, from the land of our father Abraham, let us affirm that *God is merciful* and that the greatest blasphemy is to profane his name by hating our brothers and sisters. Hostility, extremism and violence are not born of a religious heart: they are betrayals of religion. We believers cannot be silent when terrorism abuses religion; indeed, we are called unambiguously to dispel all misunderstandings. Let us not allow the light of heaven to be overshadowed by the clouds of hatred! Dark clouds of terrorism, war and violence have gathered over this country. All its ethnic and religious communities have suffered. In particular, I would like to mention the Yazidi community, which has mourned the deaths of many men and witnessed thousands of women, girls and children kidnapped, sold as slaves, subjected to physical violence and forced conversions. Today, let us pray for those who have endured these sufferings, for those who are still dispersed and abducted, that they may soon return home. And let us pray that freedom of conscience and freedom of religion will everywhere be recognised and respected; these are fundamental rights, because they make us free to contemplate the heaven for which we were created.

Read Full Message (supplied by the Vatican) at:

<https://catholicoutlook.org/pope-francis-message-to-representatives-of-the-abrahamic-religions-at-ur-iraq/>



Only when we're brave enough  
to explore the darkness will we  
discover the infinite power of our  
light.

BRENÉ BROWN





A man paddles a canoe, on the Sepik Rive in Papua New Guinea. Photograph: Renato Granier/Alamy

## **Entire villages would be wiped out if natural disaster hit dam on PNG mine, critics say**

***Lyanne Togiba, Port Moresby & Ben Doherty (Pacific Editor), The Guardian, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021***

***‘Rocks under where the dam will be built is not safe ... If there is a fault in the structure, the dam will give way,’ says West Sepik official***

A proposed dam to hold billions of tonnes of mine waste near the head of Papua New Guinea’s longest river is a potential environmental disaster that could wipe out entire villages if there was a natural disaster, government officials, environmental advocacy groups and villagers living along the river say.

The Frieda River gold and copper mine – slated for development by Chinese state-owned, Australian-based miner PanAust for northern New Guinea island – would be the largest mine in PNG’s history, and one of the biggest in the world.

Part of the mine’s proposal would be a 12,000ha reservoir built to hold more than [4.6bn tonnes of waste rock and mine tailings](#). The reservoir would hold 9.6bn cubic metres of water – twice the size of Sydney harbour – and the embankment built to hold it would be 187 metres high.

The Frieda River is a tributary to the Sepik River which, at 1,100km is PNG’s longest river and a key source of water, food and livelihood for tens of

thousands who live along it.

West Sepik provincial administrator Conrad Tilau told the Guardian the government's position was clear: "There should not be any dam built at the Frieda.

"The formation of the rocks under where the dam will be built is not safe, and also because ... the water contained in the dam will be huge. If there is a fault in the structure, the dam will give way.

Read More:

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/14/entire-villages-would-be-wiped-out-if-natural-disaster-hit-dam-on-png-mine-critics-say?utm\\_term=41d97115e40104875b7bd5c92bfdcf45&utm\\_campaign=GuardianToDayAUS&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/14/entire-villages-would-be-wiped-out-if-natural-disaster-hit-dam-on-png-mine-critics-say?utm_term=41d97115e40104875b7bd5c92bfdcf45&utm_campaign=GuardianToDayAUS&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=GTAU_email)

## REFLECTIONS



**Pace-e-Bene Daily Non-Violence Inspirations**

**Wednesday March 10, 2021**

***"Cowardice asks the question, is it safe? Expediency asks the question, is it politic? Vanity asks the question, is it popular? But, conscience asks the question, is it right? And there comes a time when we must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but one must take it because it is right."***

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

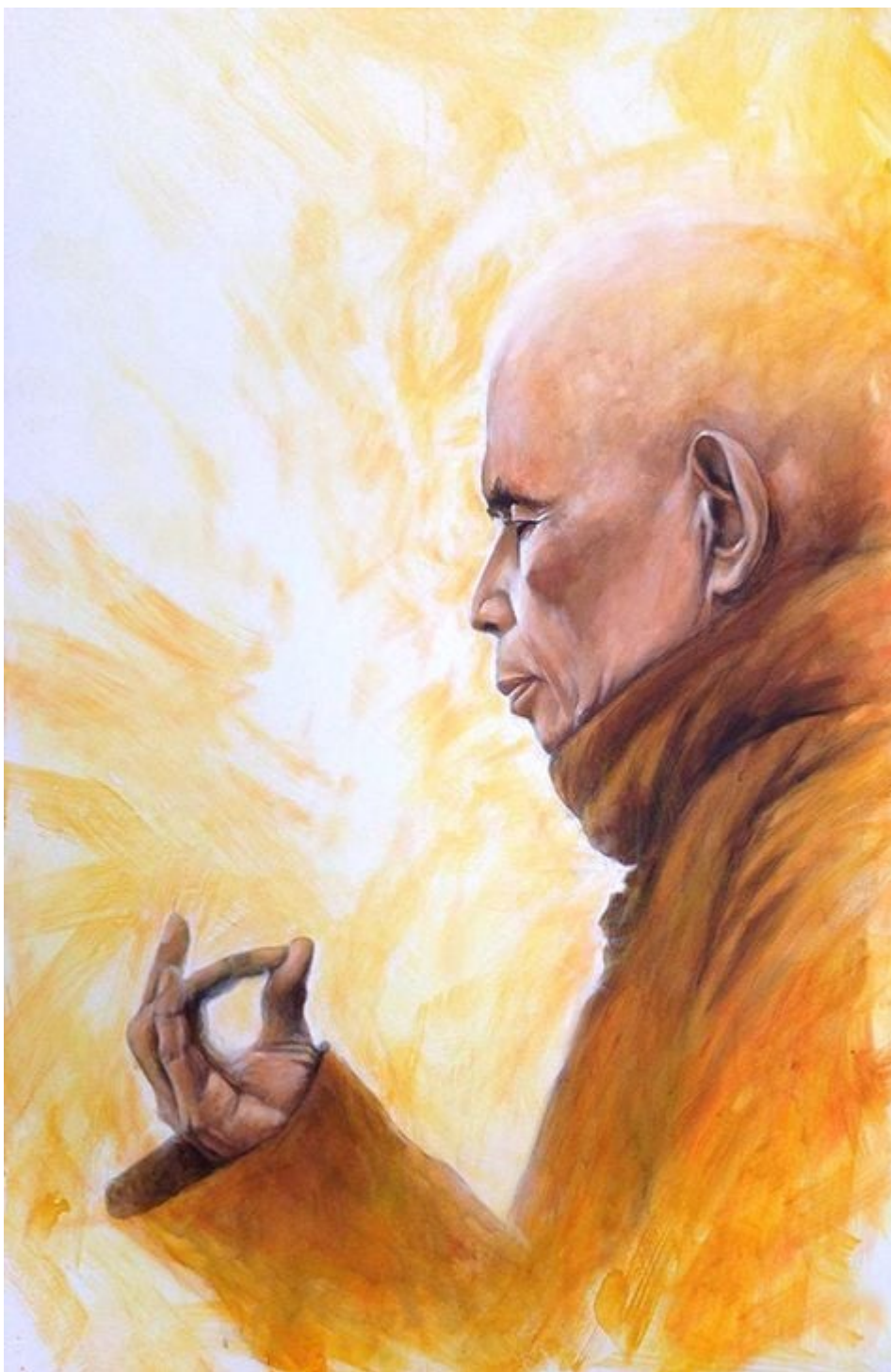
## **Sheltering God,**

*You were born in flight,  
Your parents anxious and given no rest.  
The manner of your birth calls us to  
Open-heartedness and sensitivity to the strangers in our midst.  
Help us not to flee your challenge.  
The violence of the present time teaches us fear of the stranger,  
Reluctant to reach out to those who are different.  
Grace us this day as we seek  
To see you in the faces of those uprooted,  
Weary, as they seek refuge and peace. Amen.*

*Blessed are the wanderers and those adrift.  
Blessed are the strangers at our door.  
Blessed are the unfed, the homeless on the road.  
Blessed is the child crying in pain.  
Blessed is the mother working to provide for her children, left behind in her native  
country.  
Blessed are those who welcome Christ to be born again when they welcome these  
ones.  
Blessed are we who struggle to make a place in our hearts for all of our brothers and  
sisters. Amen.*

**Source: Claude Mostowik msc Fifth Sunday Lent Liturgy Resources**





Thich Nhat Hanh - Painting: © Tamara Patrick

## **Thich Nhat Hanh - Gems**

### ***"Why Do You Cry, Sister?"***

A few years ago, a pro-government group in Ho Chi Minh City spread a rumor that I had passed away from a heart attack. This news caused much confusion inside the country. A Buddhist nun wrote me that the news arrived at her community while she was teaching a class of novices, and the atmosphere in the class sank and one nun

passed out. I have been in exile for more than 20 years because of my involvement in the peace movement, and I do not know this young nun or the present generation of Buddhist monks and nuns in Vietnam. But life and death is only a fiction, and not very deep; why do you cry, sister? You are studying Buddhism, doing what I am doing. So if you exist, I also exist. What does not exist cannot come into existence and what exists cannot cease to be. Have you realized that, sister? If we cannot bring a speck of dust from "existence" to "non-existence," how can we do that to a human? On earth, many people have been killed struggling for peace, for human rights, for freedom and social justice, but no one can destroy them. They still exist. Sister, do you think that Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Lambrakis, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are "dead people?" No, they are still here. We are they. We carry them in each cell of our bodies. If you ever hear such news again, please smile. Your serene smile will prove that you have attained great understanding and courage. Buddhism and all of humankind expect this of you.

***Thich Nhat Hanh, in "The Sun my Heart" (1988).***

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia as the traditional owners and custodians of the land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice. We pay our respects to the Elders; past, present and future. As we take our next step we remember the first footsteps taken on this sacred land.

The Edmund Rice Centre wholeheartedly supports and endorses the  
ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART  
and urges all Australians to get behind this wonderful statement.

Our mailing address is:

\*|HTML:LIST\_ADDRESS\_HTML|\* \*|END:IF|\*