

Catholic Mission

Media Release

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“The Crocodile is not an Angry Thing”

“You do not have to be people divided into two parts, as though an Aboriginal had to borrow the faith and life of Christianity, like a hat or a pair of shoes, from someone else who owns them. Jesus calls you to accept his words and his values into your own culture. To develop in this way will make you more than ever truly Aboriginal.”

When Pope John Paul II spoke these words at Blatherskite Park, Alice Springs, on a hot November afternoon in 1986, he was describing the term “inculturation” - the coexistence of Christianity with Aboriginal Dreaming - as a mission which the Church in Australia needed to realise to be fulfilled.

Twenty five years on, Aboriginal elder Carmelita Perdjert from the remote community of Wadeye in the Northern Territory, expresses her own story of blending her beliefs into one. Translated from the local Murrinhpatha language, Carmelita said :

“In the dormitory I learned about Jesus and in holidays I would go back to my people in the bush. There I would deepen my understanding of the whole dreaming and the relationship with the crocodile and its meaning to the land and to me,”

“People who are not of my clan sometimes think of the crocodile as an angry thing, but for me the crocodile is a friendly and gentle being. It is God who made the crocodile and who made all, and the story of the crocodile and the creation story of my own people is something makes me think of the story of Genesis.”

For an insight an insight into Catholicism with an Aboriginal heart in Wadeye see this narrative clip at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B96_yT9am2k

For more information contact Catholic Mission’s Media Officers on (02) 9919 7800 or visit www.catholicmission.org.au