



The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

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For Immediate release

"We welcome the new head of our church – Pope Francis. He leads us in what is a difficult time. It is apt that he has taken the name of St. Francis of Assisi, a man who lived the way many of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters do today - simply and in poverty " said Thelma Parker, Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC).

'We know that theologically he is conservative but we hope that he will embrace the words of Pope John Paul II :

"the Church herself in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others'."

"Indigenous Australian Catholics should be heartened that he has been willing to challenge powerful interests and is deeply concerned about the social injustices in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America. The fact that the cardinals have elected the first European Pope in 1300 years shows us that the Catholic Church is 'opening up'. "Thelma said. "He faces the challenge of supporting sexual abuse victims and reforming the mechanisms in place to deal with the issue. "

NATSICC hopes that Pope Francis will steer the church in such a way that it becomes more transparent and willing to accept the cultural idiosyncrasies of its various congregations around the world.

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