



Australia



The Commonwealth of Australia is an entire continent and is located between the Indian and South Pacific Oceans.



By land mass, it is the world's smallest continent but the sixth largest country. It is just slightly smaller than the continental United States. Their population, which is centered

mostly in coastal cities, is only about 8% as big as the ours.

Human habitation of the continent is thought to have started at least 40,000 years ago with the migration of people by boat and land bridges from Southeast Asia. These people were the ancestors of the modern day Indigenous Australians, whose cultural is one of the oldest continuous ones on earth.

Australia was colonized by the British in the 18th century who used the land as a "penal colony":

they sent their convicted criminals to live there. Many current citizens will say that their heritage as a freedom loving people comes from the fact that they are descendants of prisoners!

Australia is the home to a great diversity of animals. Two of their most famous are marsupials: the kangaroos and koala.



As of the 2016 census, a little more than half of all Australians identified themselves as Christian. Half of those people said they were Roman Catholic. The most of the rest of those calling themselves Christian identified as Anglican. About 30% of the population in that census reported themselves as having "no religion". This was an increase from about 20% in just ten years.

MCA in Australia

Although it is not a mission country, there are still many very poor people in Australia, especially in the central and western areas known as the Outback, where many of the Indigenous, or “First Nation” people live. Much like in the United States, the arrival of Europeans brought illnesses to which the local people had no immunities causing widespread illness and death.

Coupled with harsh laws and treatment, the **First Nations peoples** have experienced much prejudice and loss of land. They work very hard to preserve their culture. One of their cultural expressions is their “dot” paintings. Almost in the style of pointillism, each symbol helps to tell a story unique to their people. As many have become Christian, their art expresses their faith as well.

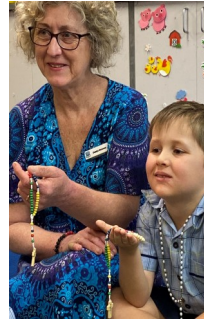
Recently, a nationwide Year of Youth was celebrated. This image, painted by Amunda Gorey, an Indigenous artist, was used as the central theme. It is called *Christ Our Joy*.

Using multi-sized dots as is the custom, the picture depicts Christ in red extending his hand down to Mary in blue, and with her, to the Church. With His other hand, He points us all to God. At the center of the image is a cross made of circles, which symbolize gathering. The smaller dots are people—some of us further away from the Cross than others, showing us on our different journeys to



Christ. The artist says, “Everyone will see, feel and sense the painting differently. Each is valued as our stories and experiences are different.”

Missionary Childhood is alive and well in Australia! It is called Catholic Mission but the organization has the same intent—to teach children to pray and sacrifice so that other children in the world may know how much God loves them.



During our recent school visits in the Archdiocese of Brisbane Australia, students were introduced to the World Mission Rosary. They were very excited to learn that children around the world were already praying for them on the blue beads! They pledged their support to pray for the whole world as well.

An important part of MCA in Australia is “Socktober”. Held during the month of October, students pledge to “sock it to poverty”! This movement started in Brisbane with “Crazy Sock Days” for the missions but has turned into much more, nationwide.

Inspired by pictures of children in the missions who made their own soccer balls out of rolled up plastic bags or used clothes taped together, children in Australia are doing the same and then have fundraiser “kick-offs” to raise much needed funds for the missions.



Students ask their friends and family to sponsor them for how many goals they can make: they get 2 points per goal made with their homemade ‘sockballs’ and 1 point with a real soccer ball. During many school visits, students shared their homemade ‘sockballs’ as not all students had made them, showing their true mission spirit of sharing!

At last report, the children in Australia sent \$537,857.00 to their brothers and sisters in the missions.