

When Halee Cosar stood for a moment's silence at her school Anzac ceremony in 1983, she wanted to ask for an extra minute to honour the Turkish soldiers at Gallipoli. While around 141,000 Allied troops were killed or wounded in the Gallipoli campaign, the casualties on the Ottoman side numbered over 251,000.

So Cosar wasn't being disrespectful: in fact she wanted to be twice as respectful. (ABC News).

Now a teacher herself, this Turkish-Australian poet has achieved the two minutes' silence at several schools where she has taught. She raises an important, perhaps uncomfortable question for us as we mark this 100th anniversary of the cessation of fighting in World War 1.



Over recent decades, we have dedicated ourselves with fresh devotion in honouring those who have served our country in times of conflict. Armed with increased understanding of the traumatic consequences that accompany returned military personnel, we have come to honour and respect them with more attentive enthusiasm and reverence.

Our young people are more informed about the price that has been paid for their freedom. While there is much that has improved in the care of our war veterans, there is still much work to do. Of special need of improvement is the recognition of the plight of women who suffered as POW's during wartime.

Given that descendants of all major combatants in battles in which Australia has been engaged are now woven into the fabric of Australian society, Halee Cosar whose great-grandfather died at Gallipoli, hopes that we would recognise in some way those who served their countries bravely. She raises a question, for many of us an uncomfortable one, that we may not be ready to answer just yet, but is a question that is not likely to go away. We've made some small steps, but they remain just that.

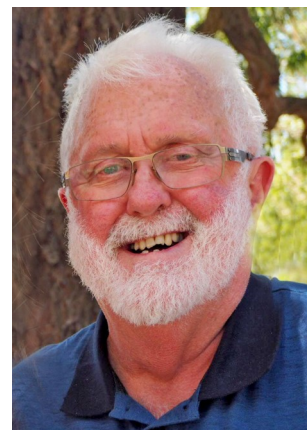
On another front, occasionally seeping into our national consciousness is the awareness of the suffering and loss of life inflicted on the Aboriginal peoples of this land as Europeans moved in uninvited, imposing their own laws and customs and as often as not, disposing of anyone who got in their way. The 180th anniversary of the Myall Creek Massacre earlier this year may have jabbed at our conscience and then disappeared from view again.



Fr Kevin Bates'
reflection

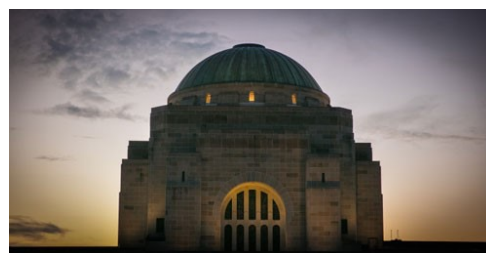
Nov 11, 2018

Maturing Remembrance Day



The 'Forgotten Wars' as historian Henry Reynolds refers to them, in which Aboriginal people died defending their lands from invading forces, are not counted among the military annals of our nation.

The Federal Government has just released plans to spend \$500m to upgrade the National War Memorial in Canberra, in order to honour further our veterans and to increase storage space for relics of battles past.



There is no indication that any of this money will be set aside to honour those for whom white settlement meant radical

dislocation, and in some places such as Tasmania, virtual genocide.

It is a good a noble thing we do as we honour our veterans. We may one day reach a certain maturity in which we are secure enough in our national identity to offer some honour to some of those who fought bravely against our forces.

We may grow to have the humility and honesty to acknowledge the devastation our own ancestors wrought upon the ancient inhabitants of this land. One day we may find suitable ways to remember their suffering and sacrifices and to express this in ritual and prayer as our attitudes and understanding of each other matures and grows.

For Australia, one of the most secular societies on earth, this may yet be a step too far. For people of faith however, this may be a real hope that we harbour. In fact it's a bit of no-brainer for people who believe that the sacrifice offered on Calvary left no one aside.

Perhaps some conversations on this historically significant Remembrance Day may begin to steer us towards a new maturity and breadth of spirit, worthy of the love whose open arms on the Cross we claim as our own.

Father Kevin