



Fr. Ramsay Nuthall
Chaplain to young offenders

+ + Fide et Amore + Through Faith and Love + Fide et Amore + Through faith and love + Fide et Amore + +

The following email was received after an ANZAC Day Ceremony I conducted in 2011 from a man who loves Australia as much as I do and fears for its future in the same way that many of us do.

Our fears are much the same; our differences lay in our solution.

Email: 25th April 2011

Ramsay,

I'm compelled to write this email to you regarding Anzac Day. Given the day is all about remembering our diggers, the men and women who fought for this once great country. It was our ancestors that went to Europe, Gallipoli and New Guinea to fight for us, and to help our allies.

Yesterday was quite insulting for all the Caucasians at the Anzac Ceremony. The speakers you chose to contribute to this auspicious occasion were of African, Middle East, Islander and Asian Origin. Not one Caucasian. NOT ONE. It was insulting for those Caucasian boys who watched, knowing there was no representative for them. This has been relayed to me by certain boys, and I must agree with their disappointment. In fact, Ramsay, it was disgusting.

Ramsay, in my opinion you have no respect for our diggers, and don't pretend you do. All you seem to concern yourself with is equality. But your equality is distorted, and borders on racial discrimination towards white Australians.

And Ramsay, I must say that I too was insulted by many of your words at the ceremony. You asked all in the gymnasium to share in your compassion for refugees who come to this country. I'm sorry, Ramsay, but I cannot. Especially in recent times and the total destruction of Villawood. But this is only one example. Many of your words were lovely, but some were just political, of which I did not concur with.

Kindest regards, Joseph B.

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for your email. You have voiced some very strident opinions powered by strong emotion: opinions that having been given voice need to be heard and in turn given a respectful and considered response.

My Response

My response is given on a somewhat personal note, and is offered in the hope that you may gain some insight into my thinking with regard to the important matters you raise.

You wrote:

In my opinion you have no respect for our diggers, and don't pretend you do.

Perhaps in addressing this point, it would be helpful to have some understanding of my personal connections to the ANZAC tradition.

Early in the second World War, my father joined the RAAF and after training in Canada was attached to the RAF and served, for four years, in Sierra Leone, the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Middle East.

Speaking at my fathers' funeral, his war comrade and my Godfather recalled:

"We flew Hudson bombers, patrolling the Atlantic for U boats, flew to Algeria supporting the British 8th Army, American Armies and the Royal Navy following the sea borne landings of the allied armies at Sicily, Messina, Salerno and at Anzio Italy near Rome. Our Squadron had a 75% loss during the War"

His father (my grandfather) served in the pre-Anzac, but still very much British Empire Boer War of 1899-1902 in the South Australian Mounted Rifles contingent: interestingly enough with 'Breaker' Morant (for a time at least). After WW I, my grandfather established and managed the Soldier settlement land grants made to returned soldiers surrounding the NSW country town of Young.



*Photo: 2nd Contingent South Australian Mounted Rifles – South Africa 1899 (South Australian State Archives)
Trp. Ramsay Nuthall third from right.
The ill-fated Trp. H.H. 'breaker' Morant third from left.*

My mothers' three brothers served in Papua New Guinea, one of whom being killed in action. After initial burial in Soputa War Cemetery (according to his two returned brothers, with the caring hands of the 'Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels' as they were both affectionately and paternalistically known at the time) his remains were later moved to the Bomana War Cemetery near Port Moresby.

My earliest memories of ANZAC date back to 1954 or 1955 when I was just three or four years old.

I remember (aided by photographs and home movies of the occasion) being held up by my mother in order that I could see my father marching by in the Sydney ANZAC Day march. I believe that I have participated in an ANZAC Day commemorative event in one capacity or another for most of the last 55 years.

I remember my grandparents travelling to Port Moresby in order to visit the war grave of their son, and how my grandmother would never buy anything that was 'Made in Japan' till the day she died, such was the depth of her unresolved grief.

I remember Jim, a WW I veteran of the Western Front who lived a few doors down from my grandmother, sobbing inconsolably as he told me of how he was one of only 15 of the 50 or so men of his company who returned after one foray. Being just 11 years old, I had no idea how to respond and was left speechless. But I felt his grief; pain and deep despair very powerfully and feel it to this day.

I remember another Jim, a WW II Prisoner of War held by the Japanese at the notorious Changi POW camp in Singapore, whom I had known for most of my life. At age 25, I had read Russell Braddon's powerful book 'The Naked Island' (Ref. <http://www.dropbears.com/books/military/changi.htm>) which had opened up the 'Changi experience' to me in a very real way.

Having an opportunity to spend a couple of hours with Jim, I mentioned that I had read the book, and I asked how he dealt with the strong feelings that he must have held – even the desire for vengeance. His response carved itself into my being:

Jim: *"After the Jap's fell, we were given an opportunity to get even against some of the guards – but it didn't make us feel any better, it didn't help, really!"*

Me: *"You were given an opportunity to get even - what do you mean?"*

Jim: *"You know what I mean!"*

The conversation quickly diverted into less weighty matters, for we had inadvertently visited a place in his soul that he rarely allowed others to enter. I felt more than a little privileged, and yes, I knew exactly what he meant!

On a more personal note, I remember my fathers violent mood swings and temper outbursts that were probably due to what in later years came to be known as 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder', so well known to Vietnam veterans and their children. There was, of course, no knowledge of or treatment for this in my fathers' day. The reality is that this seriously diminished the quality of one of the most important relationships of my early life: my relationship with my father.

With respect MoS, I think that it could be just a little unfair and somewhat unfounded to suggest that I have no respect for our Diggers.

While you do specify that it is your opinion, I think that we need to be very cautious about what we impute to others in terms of the placement of their honouring and respect, particularly when some suggestion of pretence is made.

You wrote:

“Yesterday was quite insulting for all the Caucasians at the Anzac Ceremony”.

If ANZAC were to be some sort of Caucasian pride parade (though I wonder if by Caucasian you really mean Anglo-Saxon-Celtic) then I would have to say that there are few with better credentials to lead such a celebratory parade than myself. I don't believe that there is a trace of blood other than Caucasian (Anglo-Saxon Celtic) coursing through my fair skinned veins traceable over a five hundred to a thousand year period.

I am a priest of the Church (in the English speaking world at least) that is most identified with empire and Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

At least two of my forebears were men of empire and supremacy during the 19th Century in India, the so-called Jewel in the Crown of the British Empire.



Great, Great Grandfather
Major Thomas Nuthall



Great Grandfather
Ramsay Durham Nuthall (seated)

There was a time when I took pride in this as though it somehow made me a more worthy person in one way or another! In time however, **it dawned on me that in reality this was, on my part, little more than the arrogant expression of a whole lot of pompous piss and wind!**

I realised that I have absolutely no cause for pride in anything my ancestors were or achieved and have passed on unless I take a personal responsibility to take the best (and leave the worst) of their values, apply them to our present day reality and work **to carry them into the future.**

This, I think, leads us to the question of what ANZAC is really all about. You suggest that ANZAC is **all about remembering our diggers.** Well yes, it is about that, but it is not **all** about that. It is, in reality about a whole lot more. It is about 'us' and who we really are as a people and as a nation. It is part of who we are and who we will become well into the future.

The fact of the matter is that the meaning of ANZAC is not mine any more than it is yours to determine. The meaning of ANZAC arises out of the collective memory of the nation as it interacts with the moods, attitudes and aspirations of the Australian people as they develop and change over time.

For me, part of the greater meaning of ANZAC can be found on the Returned and Services League website:

<http://www.rsl.org.au/> > Our Services > Useful Information > Symbolism > the poppy

Colonel John McCrae who wrote the following powerful words in his poem 'In Flanders' Field' first described the red poppy, the Flanders poppy, as the flower of remembrance. McCrae died three days after being wounded in action in 1918.

*We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders' fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe;
**To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.***

***If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders' fields.***

For Colonel McCrea, the meaning of remembrance cannot be separated from the act of our **taking the torch** from those who fell, and keeping faith with them by holding it high in order to **carry it into the future.**

This **once great** and I believe **still great** nation will only **remain great** well into the future if we take strident action (in this world of unprecedented migration and population movement) to ensure that we don't find ourselves facing the cultural and racial divisions that England, France, Germany, Switzerland and so many other European nations face today.

The present population of Australia at present is estimated to be over 22 million. In 2050 it will be at least 35 million. Forty years into the future our population will be nearly 75% higher than what it is now. The majority of these 15 million future Australians will not be Caucasian.

This being a given, I want my Great, Great Grandchildren to have as great an opportunity to grow in peace as I had as a child. Being of the future, my Great, Great Grandchildren are forever beyond my experience or knowledge; however, pondering the past allows some insight into the future.

A hundred and eighty years ago, worlds apart both socially and geographically, lived two Thomas's. While Great, Great Grandfather Thomas Nuthall, the Grandson of a one-time Mayor of Norwich, was doing his military bit for Queen and Empire, another Great, Great Grandfather Thomas, a labourer from Campbelltown and probably the son or Grandson of a convict, was doing his bit in the building of this nation. Had they known each other, both would have thought it impossible that they would share Great, Great Grandchildren. But they did!

In a hundred and eighty years time, the chance of you and me sharing a Great, Great Grandchild with an Asian, an African, a Middle Easterner, an Islander or an Aboriginal who lives today is more than likely, and I, from my grave and hopefully you from yours will wish them every blessing that this great nation has to give. A blessing that comes through the torch of ANZAC that hopefully **all Australians will carry into the future.**

Young Australians will only pick up the ANZAC torch through their **participation** in the Anzac tradition, in a way that is meaningful to them. You may remember some years ago when a Lebanese boy defaced a War Memorial. His punishment, approved by the RSL was to walk the Kokoda trail. His participation and inclusion in the Anzac tradition transformed his attitude from one of disrespect to one of honouring. He made it his own, and is no doubt now a better young Australian for it.

We often only see what we look for, and I wonder if those who you mention as being offended had been focusing less on issues of genetic origins, they may have noticed a bigger picture with a **particular purpose of participation and inclusion.** We had:

- An Afghani, in order to give all the boys a concrete connection with the war in Afghanistan. A war in which 27 young Australians have lost their lives to date.
- An Asian: a Korean in order to give the boys a connection with the Korean War – 'the forgotten war'.
- A Pakistani, whose forebears, being part of the British Empire, fought alongside Australian and other empire troops in both World Wars as part of the Indian forces.

In WW I, a total, 800,000 Indian troops fought in all the theatres of the war with 1½ million volunteering to fight. They fought in most theatres of war including **Gallipoli** and North and East Africa. The Indian Corps won 13,000 medals for gallantry including 12 Victoria Crosses. Interestingly our young man's namesake won the Corps first Victoria Cross during the first battle of Ypres on the Western Front in 1915.

- A Lebanese Australian. Lebanon was a province of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire at the time of the Gallipoli landing. The life of the Lebanese people was changed forever because of WW I.

- A Sudanese refugee: Sudan was effectively a British Colony from 1899 until 1956. Most Sudanese refugees (from the South) share in many aspects of British culture. More importantly, he being a refugee, I thought it appropriate that he read the prayer (taken from an RSL approved service) mentioning refugees, and again, in order for the boys to have a concrete connection with this present day problem of world wide proportions.
- Two New Zealand / Maori / Islander Boys. In a previous ANZAC commemoration (it had been pointed out to me) that there were no New Zealanders: "Anzac is about New Zealand too you know". True enough!
- Three Aboriginal Boys, and while it may not be politically correct to say it, all had at least a 75% Caucasian ethnic heritage. One with a very Irish surname, one with a very English surname and one with (alas) a very Germanic (though still Caucasian) surname. Some might argue that the many Aboriginal servicemen whose contribution to the war effort of this nation has for so long gone unrecognised are still under-represented.

On a previous occasion, I was also criticized for including a Papua New Guinean in the commemorative ceremony, not for the colour of his skin but for the nature of his offending behaviour. To be honest I didn't even think of that, labouring as we do under the ideal that the crime is properly a matter for the Courts while rehabilitation is our concern. I just remembered that it was his countrymen who laid my uncle Norman in his first grave at Soputa.

I find it more than a little sad Joseph, that you didn't notice what so many others did: the mood of respect and connection that descended on (almost) the whole assembly.

You wrote:

All you seem to concern yourself with is equality. But your equality is distorted, and borders on racial discrimination towards white Australians.

Yes, I am concerned with equality: and I will plead guilty to carrying that torch! I will also plead guilty to attempting to empower anyone, particularly disadvantaged young people, to move into taking the personal responsibility for their lives which their God given equality demands.

Distorted? Distortion is the result of the cultural lens through which we observe the world and we can only correct our distorted vision with reference to the eye chart of our spiritual and cultural ideals.

It was the 'distorted' notions of equality held by the very Caucasian William Wilberforce (1759-1833) that led to the abolition of the British slave trade.

It was the 'distorted' notions of equality held by the very Caucasian Elizabeth Fry (1780 – 1845) that led to major prison reform in Great Britain.

It was the 'distorted' notions of equality held by the very Caucasian Abraham Lincoln (1809 – 1865) that led (in part) to the abolition of slavery in the American South:

(Ref. - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_Address).

Equality (and compassion) lies at the heart of the Christian faith, the faith which has formed Caucasian / European culture over the last two thousand years. A faith tradition that in turn lies at the heart of our legal system: Equality before God translates to equality before the Law.

Equality, from which the whole notion of freedom emerges, also lies at the very heart of the ANZAC tradition. Again, from the RSL website:

<http://www.rsl.org.au/> > Our Services > Useful information > Symbolism > The 'Dead Man's Penny'

1914 - 1918 Memorial Plaque - 'Dead Man's Penny'

"The memorial plaques were issued to commemorate all those who died as a result of war service from within the British Commonwealth. Each plaque had the name of the soldier commemorated individually embossed as part of the design. **The full name was given without any indication of rank or honour's to show the equality** of sacrifice of all those who had lost their lives. The first plaques were distributed in Australia in 1922".

You wrote:

I must say that I too was insulted by many of your words at the ceremony. You asked all in the gymnasium to share in your compassion for refugees who come to this country. I'm sorry, Ramsay, but I cannot. Especially in recent times and the total destruction of Villawood.

I believe I spoke about the compassion of the legendary Simpson (described as Australia's favourite hero) at Gallipoli and how that served as an example of the compassion of Australians, which allows refugees to share in the benefits of the Anzac tradition. Refer <http://anzacs.net/Simpson.htm>

The great gift and benefit of Australian citizenship (and at the core of what the Anzac's fought for) is the **'Rule of Law'**.

To allow the (total destruction?) of Villawood to impact on our perceptions of what happens in a Juvenile Justice Centre is neither fair nor helpful.

We cannot mix legal apples with legal oranges: the Villawood detainees are **unauthorised** immigrants, and as such are being dealt with under the **rule of Australian law**, laws that deal with such matters.

Our ethnic detainees are (in the main) **authorised** immigrants / refugees who hold Australian citizenship and as such are **entitled** to be here, being under an obligation to live under and obey Australian law. They are detained, as are Caucasian detainees, because they have broken the 'social contract' that comes with citizenship or authorised residency.

The **Rule of Law**, in one view going back as far as the ancient Greek philosopher's Socrates and Plato, depends on the notion that in a **just and good state** 'citizens may disagree with the law, but are bound to obey the law'.

The ideal of a **just and good state** is the great gift of our Caucasian, Anglo-Saxon-Celtic heritage to this nation.

It is the great gift that the Anzacs fought and died for.

A great deal of 'righteous anger' is conveyed in your words. I hear and respect that this anger is heartfelt and grounded in genuine concerns for our present and future nation. I have no doubt that your anger emerges from what you see as attacks on our **just and good state**, and I wonder if we explored these issues then we may find ourselves sharing some common ground. Perhaps our differences lie in our approach in dealing with what we both perceive as a very great challenge to what we love:

You feel that we need to affirm and hold what was, I feel that we need to embrace and move into what will come!

Increasingly, I believe that the battle of all Anzacs must become the continuing battle of all Australians: our 'eternal vigilance' is required if Australia is to remain a just and good Nation.

Eternal vigilance against:

- The unbridled reign of highly paid populist politicians and self-protecting public servants for whom transparency and due process are mere slogans to hide behind. People who place love of power, prestige and salary before love of people, fair play and natural justice.
- Economic policies that allow the ever-increasing gap between the rich and the poor.
- The trivialisation and manipulation of truth by sensationalist media.
- The fact that the 'certain' Caucasian boys to whom you refer have lived a life, under the Australian flag, that has not empowered them to take responsibility for their lives: a responsibility that undergirds personal and national freedom. A life where they have not been empowered or challenged to claim their freedom; a freedom that other men and women were prepared to died for.

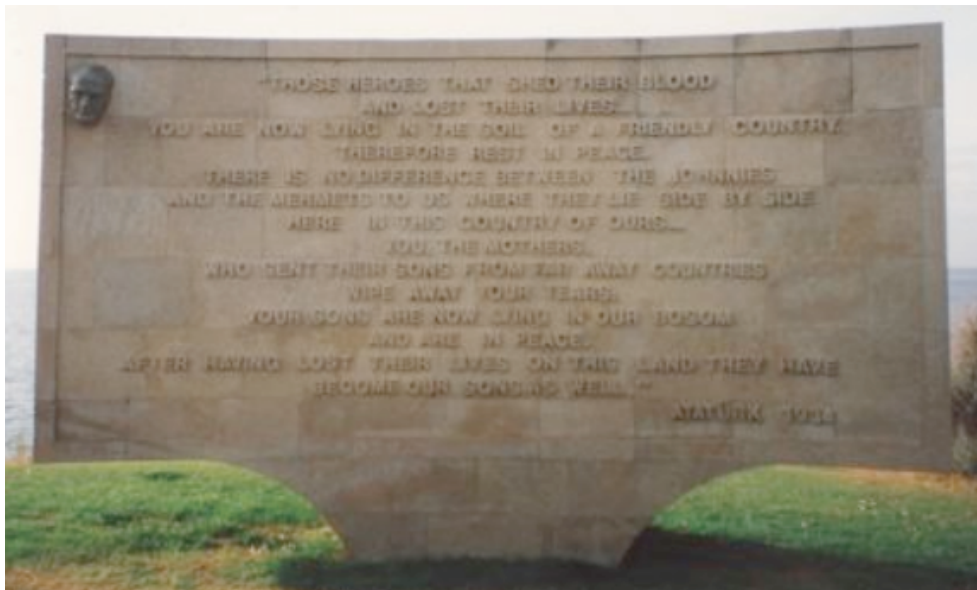
The list goes on.

I hope that I can encourage you to direct your anger at these very real present day challenges to the Anzac tradition.

I hope that you can direct your anger into moulding the future of our nation from the best of our past.

I hope that you can encourage the 'certain' boys and your colleagues to live out the best of their heritage, and not descend into that truly disgusting phenomenon of the 'White Supremacist' mentality that exists among some of our population.

I hope that we can all take counsel from the wisdom and generosity of spirit enshrined in the ANZAC memorial at Anzac Cove: a memorial placed by the one time Commander of Turkish troops at Gallipoli, the enemy then, a friendly country now, to the Anzac's who 'shed their blood and lost their lives' at that place.



*"Those heroes that shed their blood
And lost their lives...
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country.
Therefore rest in peace.
There is no difference between the Johnnies
And the Mehments to us where they lie side by side
Here in this country of ours...
You, the mothers, who sent their sons from faraway countries
Wipe away your tears; your sons are now lying in our bosom,
And are in peace.
After having lost their lives on this land, they have
Become our sons as well."*

***Kemal Ataturk, the commander of the Turkish 19th
Division during the Gallipoli Campaign, and the first
President of the Turkish Republic.***

Perhaps a present day paraphrase of this noble ideal could be:

*There is no difference between the Johnnies
And the Mehments to us where we live side by side
Here in this great country of ours; We live in peace
And those who have come to live with us, they have
Become our sons as well, the sons of our Anzac's.*

And finally, in the words of "Recessional", a poem by Rudyard Kipling, which he composed on the occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, which in Australia and New Zealand is sung as a hymn on Anzac Day.

The words "**Lest We Forget**" form the refrain of "Recessional". The phrase offers a warning about the perils of hubris (excessive pride) and the inevitable decline of imperial power. Ref. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recessional_\(poem\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recessional_(poem))

*The tumult and the shouting dies—
The Captains and the Kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,*

Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Ramsay Nuthall