

Deacon Boniface Perdjert

Yellow House Colour



Boniface Perdjert was born at Port Keats/Wadeye on May 1936. He was the first baby baptized in the area after the Catholic Mission started in 1935. He was taught by the Missionary of Sacred Heart. His own father taught him how to hunt and fish and do all the Aboriginal things but the Priest taught him the religious and Catholic faith.

Boniface Perdjert man of extraordinary faith; he was able to describe the ways in which his culture and faith came together. He once described this relationship by saying “Jesus told us we have to love God with whole hearts, mind and spirit that means the whole of me and the whole of me is Aboriginal. There is no other way for me to love him.” Simple yet powerful.

Boniface Perdjert was ordained the first permanent Deacon in Australia at Port Keats on July 19, 1974 by Bishop John O'Loughlin, the Bishop of Darwin.

Throughout his lifetime, Deacon Boniface had the rare privilege of meeting three popes: Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

He assisted at the celebration of Mass with John Paul II in Alice Springs in 1986, when the Pope delivered the famous address to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

“When I read the gospels, I read them as an Aboriginal...so many of the things Christ said and did and the way He lived, make me think of the good things of our way of life. Christ did not get worried about material things....He looked on them as things that get in the way and make it hard to get to our true country. He was born in the countryside in a cave, like many of us have been born. He walked about like us and with nowhere to lay His head. He died with nothing on a cross. So many of our people die with nothing. He was strong on sharing. We do a lot of things like that. Of course He went a bit further. In the Eucharist He shared Himself as nobody else could.”

Deacon Boniface again assisted Pope John Paul II at the Mass for the beatification of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop in Sydney in 1995 and was present in Rome for her Canonisation in 2010.

He was also among those who welcomed Pope Benedict to Australia in 2008 to celebrate World Youth Day in Sydney.

Deacon Boniface was 82 when he passed away on March 18, 2019. He blazed a trail for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to follow as he not only walked between two worlds – Catholic and Traditional – he brought them together. His words and actions spoke loudly to the members of the Wadeye Community – of which he was a deeply loved and respected Elder – but also to the Catholic Hierarchy with whom he shared his wisdom on many official occasions.