

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

Today, 9th August, is marked by the United Nations as International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, and it is worth quoting from the official website:

“There are an estimated 370 million indigenous people in the world, living across 90 countries. They make up less than 5 per cent of the world's population, but account for 15 per cent of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures.

Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples.

Indigenous peoples have sought recognition of their identities, their way of life and their right to traditional lands, territories and natural resources for years, yet throughout history their rights have always been violated. Indigenous peoples today, are arguably among the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of people in the world. The international community now recognizes that special measures are required to protect their rights and maintain their distinct cultures and way of life.”

The theme this year is indigenous languages. Quoting again from the official website:

“This year's observance is dedicated to Indigenous Peoples' Languages in view of 2019 being marked as the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

The large majority of the languages in danger are spoken by indigenous peoples. It is estimated that, every 2 weeks, an indigenous language disappears, placing at risk the respective indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. That is why, on this International Day, the goal is to draw attention to the critical loss of indigenous languages and the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote them at both national and international levels. Languages play a crucially important role in the daily lives of all peoples, are pivotal in the areas of human rights protection, peace building and sustainable development, through ensuring cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue.”

This of course ties in fully with the aim of the Community of the Cross of Nails to learn to live with difference and celebrate diversity. For that great human diversity we thank God.

Kingsley Boulton
9th August 2019