

## Vignette

Margaret Kemarre Turner

*I WAS BORN AT HARTS RANGE and my parents lived all around the Harts Range area. My mum and dad were moved by the government to Charles Creek. Anthelke ewlpaye, they call it, which means the gum leaves on the banks of the creek. The first Catholic mission was there.*

*My family was moved to Arltunga. I believe it was 1942. The army moved the families. I stayed in the dormitory there with my sister. My mum and dad didn't stay there very long. They went back to Harts Range.*

*I got baptized at Arltunga, then made my first Communion and Confirmation. That's where I learned how to pray. We still spoke our own language; the priests and nuns never stopped us talking in our own tongue. The only thing they wanted us to do was learn in school and learn our faith. We were very strong, growing up as Catholic people – my family was all baptized. I had seven brothers who are all in heaven now.*

*In 1955 my brother picked me up and took me to Santa Teresa, and I stayed in the dormitory there. I was about sixteen. We lived there. We knew we were Catholic people. I got married, tenth of December 1955 to my husband Max. We had eight children. I lost three. Now I've only got one son and four girls. I stayed at Santa Teresa and I still had good faith as a Catholic person, which I still have today.*

*I work with the priests and sisters who come here and tell them how Aboriginal people see God in our culture and how we praise God in our own language because the language is given to us Arrernte people by God. When we come into Church we have a smoking ceremony. We smoke the Bishop when he gives Confirmation and the children going in, so they can be purified and cleansed and receive God in their heart. At Mass it is very reverent, very sacred talk and I tell the children not to talk, not to play. I tell them what Church is all about. I welcome visitors to our Church – the Church belongs to everyone and I relate to other Churches as well because they are serving the Lord in their way. They*

*respect me as a Catholic person and as a leader and we respect other leaders.*

*God gave us our land too. This little patch is yours. You can't get onto another bit because that belongs to other families. But we didn't carry around a map. The map God gave us is in our heads and in our hearts. It is like there is a big encyclopaedia in there about what's in our land and what is so sacred.*

*Burials were very sacred to us. If someone died we would move away from that place. We might go and stay somewhere else, maybe for a week. Only the right people do the burial, the nyurrpe, we call them; the brothers, sisters and cousins of that person who died.*

*Today, we as leaders can go to the burial because we are working in the Church now. We know that person is no longer there. The body is there but Ngkarte (God) has got the spirit. He is up there looking down on us.*

*In the land we bury that person and that person's spirit is amongst us. Like my daughter came in and saw her grandfather sitting on the hill with his walking stick and black hat. He was happy. His spirit is still there in the land because his body has remained there.*