

1972

A Brief Statement

Migration Sunday

27th February

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Bishops' Commission for Social and Charitable Works*

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Again, today, as on each of twenty-one past years, we have the annual observance of Migration Day, with the issuing of a brief statement. Today's statement has, as its theme, the pastoral care and spiritual well being of immigrants, particularly the many thousands who choose Australia as a new home. [2830]

Pastoral care of immigrants has been a particular concern of the Church here from the inception of postwar immigration and is exercised extensively throughout the nation, aided indispensably by the zealous services of some two hundred priests from abroad. [2831]

The Combined efforts of local clergy and chaplains, however, to be really effective, must have the support of each and every Catholic, in a genuine Christ-like attitude towards immigrants and by a personal involvement in what concerns their wellbeing, especially their spiritual welfare. [2832]

In their condition of settling-in as newcomers, with attendant anxieties and fears, immigrants stand in grave need of kindly brotherly assistance. As strangers in a vastly changed environment, they are especially vulnerable in matters of faith and religious practice and easily enough, can drift into religious indifference and ultimately to a total loss of faith. The history of mass emigration to other continents in the past century, records a heavy loss of faith, chiefly through inadequacy of pastoral care and general fraternal concern. This must not happen here, nor must future history indict our generation as accessories, by default, to tragic defections of Faith. *"He that shall see his brother in need and shall shut up his heart from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him". (1 Jn. 11-17.)* [2833]

Catholicism manifests itself in a conscious, helpful acceptance – in the name of Our Common Father – of one another, whose brothers we are in Christ: – *"By this shall all men know you are my disciples if you have love one for another. (Jn. XIII 35.)* [2834]

What is demanded of each of us is a personal involvement, where possible and when required, in the problem packed process of the settlement of our immigrants; particularly in facilitating their participation in parochial and community life and enabling them to acquire the comforting sense of being a part of the surrounding life and, indeed, really belonging. [2835]

A warm climate of human and Christian solidarity should characterise these relationships so that – *“Therefore no more are there strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints and household of God.”* (Eph. 11. XVIII. 19.) [2836]

Let us be mindful, too, that in the person of the needy migrant whom we befriend, we recognize and welcome Christ Himself – *“As often as you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to Me.”* (Matt. XXV. 40.) [2837]

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Source: Archives of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO), Canberra, Australia.
