

1974

A Brief Statement

Immigration Sunday

24th February

*A. R. E. Thomas, Bishop of Bahurst
Bishops' Commission for Social and Charitable Works*

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Today is being observed as Immigration Sunday and, as in past years, a brief statement from the Bishops' Commission marks the occasion. [2845]

From the inception of post war immigration, the Catholic Migration Committees, set up by the Bishops, have collaborated actively and shared worthily in Government programmes of nation building through immigration. [2846]

In the post war period some three million persons, usually high in hopes and aspirations, have chosen Australia as their future home. For thousands of these persons the Bishops' Committees have assumed responsibility for their initial accommodation, their sustenance temporarily, their placement in work and a continuing advisory care towards their taking a part and place in the family of the Australian Nation. [2847]

Associated, indispensably and appreciatively, with the Committees' services to migrants are the Migrant Chaplains, some one hundred and fifty in number and of many languages. During almost a quarter of a century now, the people of many nations settling in Australia, have enjoyed the services of this zealous, devoted body of Immigration Sunday 1974 priests whose one great concern is the spiritual well being of all under their care. [2848]

A large number of these persons, about 50,000, were given interest free travel loans. These loans are part of the services to migrants emanating from the International Catholic Migration Commission at Geneva of which Australia's Federal Catholic Immigration Committee is an affiliate. Such services as these instanced and of which there is a wide range, necessarily create heavy financial burdens. To cover these and so ensure a continuation of migration work, there is associated with to-day's Commemoration a special collection. Please be generous in your support of this appeal. [2849]

Migration work, concerned as it is with persons, their rights, their human dignity, calls for a cooperative effort in opening up to all in their temporary condition of isolation and insecurity a more humane life where each man shall be esteemed as neighbour and brother. People everywhere have a positive duty, according to means, to contribute to the real progress of the human community in its entirety. [2850]

What is done for migrants and migration is not only for the good of persons or of Country but, most importantly, serves as a strengthening of human relations and so drawing men closer into a brotherhood that leads, assuredly, to the peace and contentment all men crave. [2851]

Recently Pope Paul, speaking of migration, viewed it as an invitation from God to pull down the barriers of racism and fling away all economic and political selfishness. The Pope reminded us that Christ identified Himself with the foreigner: "I was a stranger and you made me welcome." (Mat. 25-35.) [2852]

Our prayers then today, "Migration Day" are for the well being and spiritual welfare of migrant peoples and, indeed, of all of us that we all will increase our love and service of God in gracious and generous service of all God's people. For the Australian Episcopal Conference Commission for Social and Charitable Works [2853]

A. R. E. Thomas,
Bishop of Bathurst,
Deputy for Migration.

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