

1977

A Brief Statement

## **Immigration Sunday**

**27th February**

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

27 February 1977

Immigration Sunday 1977, the twenty seventh such annual commemoration, [2867]  
reminds us, once again, of the special needs of those of our fellow men who,  
whether by choice or from force, leave their homelands for new and distant places.

This world-wide movement of peoples produces grave dislocation and, in varying [2868]  
degrees, special strains and stresses that press heavily upon all involved.

Invariably, migrants and especially refugees, are reduced, in this movement, to the [2869]  
condition of fellow humans in real need. Their state of isolation, of insecurity, of  
homelessness, invites, indeed demands, the awareness and positive concern of the  
world community; particularly from all in whom God's love abides:  
*"He that shall see his brother in need and shall shut up his heart from him, how do  
the love of God abide in him".*  
(Jn. 3.17)

In times of economic recession such as Australia is experiencing, migrants are [2870]  
especially vulnerable and likely to be among the first to be affected by inflation and  
unemployment. They now form some one quarter of the Australian work force. In  
their condition of yet unsettled and un-established newcomers, they need now more  
than ever our full moral support, genuine fraternal friendship and practical help in  
making Australia their home.

In the great industrial countries overseas, millions of itinerant workers are [2871]  
unemployed and if repatriated, are still unable to earn a living at home. Refugees in  
their growing thousands, plead for asylum and an opportunity to re-build their lives  
in dignity and security that befit their origin at the Hands of the Divine Creator.  
Wide indeed is the field of migrant and refugee need and imperative the call for  
man's Christian duty towards his neighbours.

The Church, as part of its pilgrim mission, is present officially and positively in this [2872]  
field, through the Migration and Welfare Organisations, diocesan national and  
international.

Your participation by means of the special immigration collections is invited and [2873]

will be accepted gratefully.

There is then, the pastoral work of the migrant Chaplains, vital for the spiritual well [2874]  
being of their co-nationals. This merits the closest co-operation of Pastors and the  
helpful and welcome support of the laity.

What is desired overall is personal involvement, exercised in a warm and friendly [2875]  
climate of Christian solidarity and a conscious acceptance of one another, whose  
brothers we are in Christ Jesus:

*"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for  
another".*

(Jn. XIII.35)

In this personal involvement we are to see that: [2876]  
*It is Christ Who is welcomed, It is Christ Who is sheltered. It is Christ Who is fed  
and clothed.*

For the Australian Episcopal Conference Commission for Social and Charitable  
Works.

**A. R. E. Thomas**

Bishop of Bathurst - Deputy for Migration

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

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