

2001

Message

**Refugee and Migrant Sunday
Pope John Paul's Message
for World Day of Migration 2001**

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POPE JOHN PAUL II MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS 2001. [3037]

The theme set by the Holy Father for 2001 is **The pastoral care of migrants: a way to accomplish the mission of the Church today**. This theme is timely for us in Australia since the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has recently prepared a Statement on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees. This Statement will be launched by Archbishop Francis Carroll in Canberra on July 11th. It will be available from the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office soon after the launch.

- In his message, the Holy Father speaks about the Church's response to the pastoral challenge presented by migration. He makes the following points: [3038]
- Migration can be a danger to faith. If people do not know the local language and customs, they are unable to take advantage of the ordinary pastoral care of their adopted country. They are therefore abandoned to themselves.
- To address this problem, the Church has developed a program of formal pastoral care for migrants, beginning with the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* (1952).
- The 2nd Vatican Council and the new Code of Canon Law have addressed the problems of those who dwell outside their own country and who therefore cannot take advantage of ordinary pastoral care, i.e. migrants, refugees, exiles, foreign students.
- Today, there is an increasing flow of non-Christian migrants who urge the Christian community "to welcome, to dialogue, to help towards fraternity" (Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*)

Refugees and Asylum Seekers [3039]

In his message, the Holy Father states that highly developed countries (e.g. Australia) are not always able to accept all those who emigrate. Nonetheless, he says, "*it should be pointed out that the criterion for determining the level that can be sustained cannot be based solely on protecting their own prosperity, while failing to take into consideration the needs of persons who are tragically forced to ask for hospitality*"

In keeping with the Holy Father's thoughts, the Australian Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees recently called on the Federal Government to increase the numbers of refugees admitted to Australia each year: [3040]

"Australia should join with other settlement countries to further develop programs that would allow an increased number of humanitarian settlement places. This would give displaced people realistic hope of acceptance by a country like Australia instead of resorting to people smugglers. Living in Australia, perhaps we are very quick to forget that there are people in the world less fortunate than ourselves..... as a nation, we should utilize our privileged position to assist others.

Australia's Refugee Program should not be assessed solely on what we can afford. Indeed, if this were so, thousands of refugees and migrants who contributed so much to this country's progress and well-being would not have gained entry to Australia". (Bishops' Committee for Migrants and Refugees – 10th May 2001).

Immigration Detention [3041]

The Australian Migrant and Refugee Office maintains that, although there should be Immigration Reception and Processing Centres (more popularly called "Detention Centres"), asylum seekers should be kept there for only a short time – for security and health checks. Then, while their claims to refugee status continue to be processed, they should be released from the Centres under predetermined conditions. The Office of the United Nations High Commission Commissioner for Refugees in Australia (UNHCR) has stated that this is also UNHCR policy.

While in detention, asylum seekers should always be treated with dignity and respect. [3042]
Detention should not be harsh and forbidding, so that it will be a means of deterrence for future asylum seekers.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Rev. John J. Murphy

Director

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