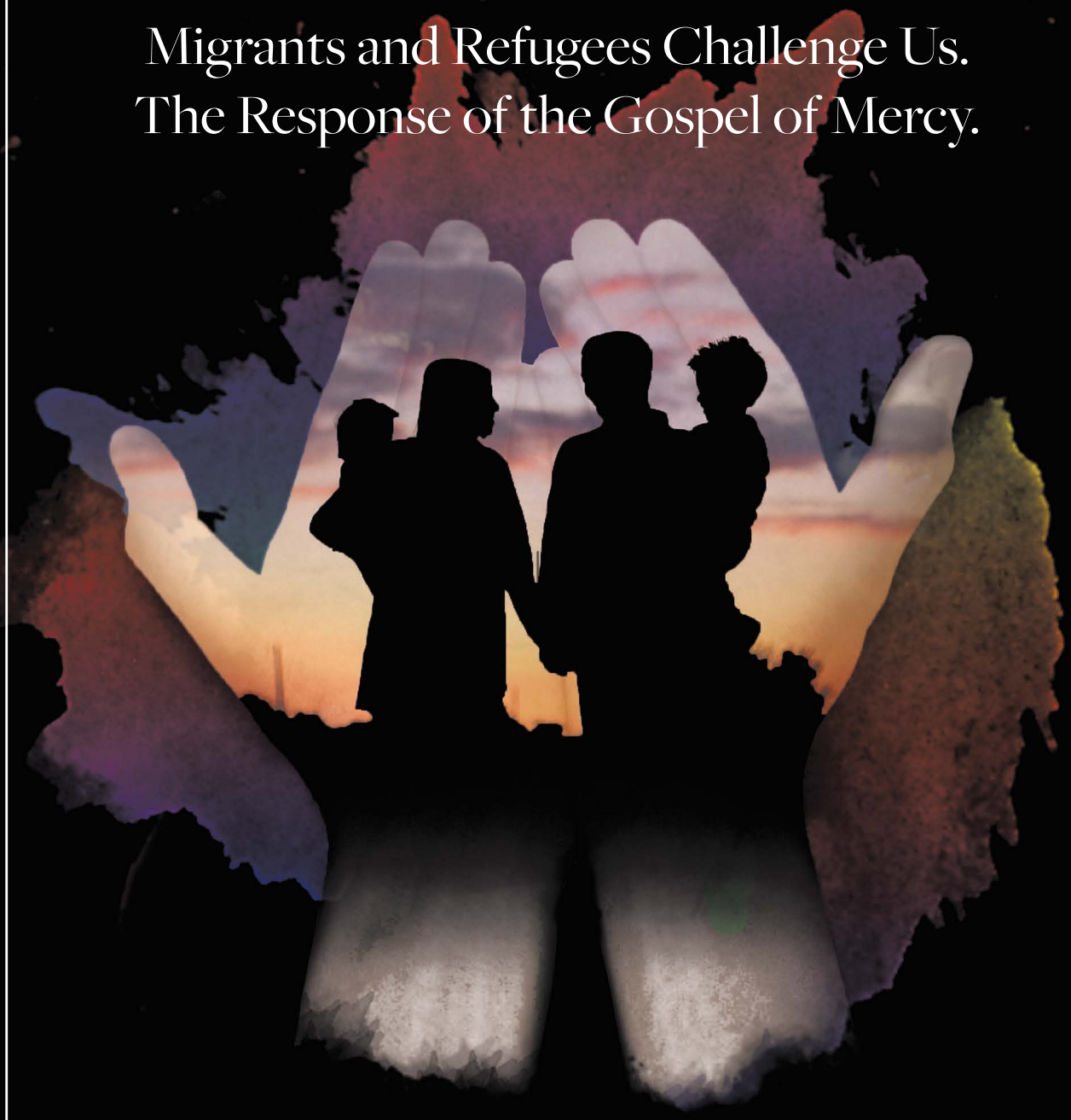
# Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy.



## 102nd *World Day of Migrants and Refugees*

Migrant & Refugee Week 22nd - 28th August 2016

# Table of Contents

*Message from the Holy Father Pope Francis*.....4

*St Frances Xavier Cabrini - Universal Patron Saint of Immigrants*.....8

*Message from Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen*.....10

*Mercy as Policy - Reflections on the Year of Mercy and Migrant and Refugee Sunday*.....13

*The Catholic Church in Syria and Iraq - Interview with Archbishop Nona*.....17

*Reflection on the Psalms of Mercy for Migrant and Refugee Week*.....21

*Reflection on the Readings for Migrant and Refugee Sunday*.....29

*Suggested Prayers of the Faithful*.....32

*Contacts*.....34

*Notes*.....35

# Message From the Holy Father Pope Francis

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the Bull of indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy I noted that "at times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives" (*Misericordiae Vultus, 3*). God's love is meant to reach out to each and every person. Those who welcome the Father's embrace, for their part, become so many other open arms and embraces, enabling every person to feel loved like a child and "at home" as part of the one human family. God's fatherly care extends to everyone, like the care of a shepherd for his flock, but it is particularly concerned for the needs of the sheep who are wounded, weary or ill. Jesus told us that the Father stoops to help those overcome by physical or moral poverty; the more serious their condition, the more powerfully is his divine mercy revealed.

In our time, migration is growing worldwide. Refugees and people fleeing from their homes challenge individuals and communities, and their traditional ways of life; at times they upset the cultural and social horizons which they encounter. Increasingly, the victims of violence and poverty, leaving their homelands, are exploited by human traffickers during their journey towards the dream of a better future. If they survive the abuses and hardships of the journey, they then have to face latent suspicions and fear. In the end, they frequently encounter a lack of clear and practical policies regulating the acceptance of migrants and providing for short or long term programmes of integration respectful of the rights and duties of all. Today, more than in the past, the Gospel of mercy troubles our consciences, prevents us from taking the suffering of others for granted, and points out way of responding which, grounded in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, find practical expression in works of spiritual and corporal mercy.

In the light of these facts, I have chosen as the theme of the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees: *Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy*. Migration movements are now a structural reality, and our primary issue must be to deal with the present emergency phase by providing programmes which address the causes of migration and the changes it entails, including its effect on the makeup of societies and peoples. The tragic stories of millions of men and women daily confront the international community as a result of the outbreak of unacceptable humanitarian crises in different parts of the world. Indifference and silence lead to complicity whenever we stand by as people are dying of suffocation, starvation, violence and shipwreck. Whether large or small in scale, these are always tragedies, even when a single human life is lost.

Migrants are our brothers and sisters in search of a better life, far away from poverty, hunger, exploitation and the unjust distribution of the planet's resources which are meant to be equitably shared by all. Don't we all want a better, more decent and prosperous life to share with our loved ones?

At this moment in human history, marked by great movements of migration, identity is not a secondary issue. Those who migrate are forced to change some of their most distinctive characteristics and, whether they like or not, even those who welcome them are also forced to change. How can we experience these changes not as obstacles to genuine development, rather as opportunities for genuine human, social and spiritual growth, a growth which respects and promotes those values which make us ever more humane and help us to live a balanced relationship with God, others and creation?

The presence of migrants and refugees seriously challenges the various societies which accept them. Those societies are faced with new situations which could create serious hardship unless they are suitably motivated, managed and regulated. How can we ensure that integration will become mutual enrichment, open up positive perspectives to communities, and prevent the danger of discrimination, racism, extreme nationalism or xenophobia?

Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself. Many institutions, associations, movements and groups, diocesan, national and international organizations are experiencing the wonder and joy of the feast of encounter, sharing and solidarity. They have heard the voice of Jesus Christ: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Rev 3:20). Yet there continue to be debates about the conditions and limits to be set for the reception of migrants, not only on the level of national policies, but also in some parish communities whose traditional tranquillity seems to be threatened.

Faced with these issues, how can the Church fail to be inspired by the example and words of Jesus Christ? The answer of the Gospel is mercy.

In the first place, mercy is a gift of God the Father who is revealed in the Son. God's mercy gives rise to joyful gratitude for the hope which opens up before us in the mystery of our redemption by Christ's blood. Mercy nourishes and strengthens solidarity towards others as a necessary response to God's gracious love, "which has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). Each of us is responsible for his or her neighbour: we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. Concern for fostering good relationships with others and the ability to overcome prejudice and fear are essential ingredients for promoting the culture of encounter, in which we are not only prepared to give, but also to receive from others. Hospitality, in fact, grows from both giving and receiving.

From this perspective, it is important to view migrants not only on the basis of their status as regular or irregular, but above all as people whose dignity is to be protected and who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare. This is especially the case when they responsibly assume their obligations towards those who receive them, gratefully respecting the material and spiritual heritage of the host country, obeying its laws and helping with its needs. Migrations cannot be reduced merely to their political and legislative aspects, their economic implications and the concrete coexistence of various cultures in one territory. All these complement the defence and promotion of the human person, the culture of encounter, and the unity of peoples, where the Gospel of mercy inspires and encourages ways of renewing and transforming the whole of humanity.

The Church stands at the side of all who work to defend each person's right to live with dignity, first and foremost by exercising the right not to emigrate and to contribute to the development of one's country of origin. This process should include, from the outset, the need to assist the countries which migrants and refugees leave. This will demonstrate that solidarity, cooperation, international interdependence and the equitable distribution of the earth's goods are essential for more decisive efforts, especially in areas where migration movements begin, to eliminate those imbalances which lead people, individually or collectively, to abandon their own natural and cultural environment. In any case, it is necessary to avert, if possible at the earliest stages, the flight of refugees and departures as a result of poverty, violence and persecution.

Public opinion also needs to be correctly formed, not least to prevent unwarranted fears and speculations detrimental to migrants.

No one can claim to be indifferent in the face of new forms of slavery imposed by criminal organizations which buy and sell men, women and children as forced labourers in construction, agriculture, fishing or in other markets. How many minors are still forced to fight in militias as child soldiers! How many people are victims of organ trafficking, forced begging and sexual exploitation! Today's refugees are fleeing from these aberrant crimes, and they appeal to the Church and the human community to ensure that, in the outstretched hand of those who receive them, they can see the face of the Lord, "the Father of mercies and God of all consolation" (*2 Cor* 1:3).

Dear brothers and sisters, migrants and refugees! At the heart of the Gospel of mercy the encounter and acceptance by others are intertwined with the encounter and acceptance of God himself. Welcoming others means welcoming God in person! Do not let yourselves be robbed of the hope and joy of life born of your experience of God's mercy, as manifested in the people you meet on your journey! I entrust you to the Virgin Mary, Mother of migrants and refugees, and to Saint Joseph, who experienced the bitterness of emigration to Egypt. To their intercession I also commend those who invest so much energy, time and resources to the pastoral and social care of migrants. To all I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.

*From the Vatican, September 12, 2015*
*Memorial of the Holy Name of Mary*

St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, M.S.C.
*Patron Saint of Immigrants*

# St Frances Xavier Cabrini

*Founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; Universal Patron Saint of Immigrants*

Mother Cabrini lived a courageous, resourceful and energetic life inspired by her deep faith in Jesus Christ. She was born Maria Francesca in 1850, the child of Stella Oldini and Agostino Cabrini, farmers living in Sant'Angelo Lodigiano, around 30 km south of Milan, in the region of Lombardy in northern Italy.

Maria Francesca graduated from school with a teaching qualification at the age of 18. She applied to join the Daughters of the Sacred Heart, who educated her, and another local religious congregation but was refused entry due to her fragile health. She spent the first few years of her professional life in Verdaho, a small town near Sant'Angelo Lodigiano. This was a period of civil unrest and of great social and economic challenges. Throughout this time, Maria Francesca remained determined to assist the suffering and serving the poor and excluded.

After a long period of discernment, Mother Cabrini (then 30 years of age) founded the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (the Cabrini Sisters) in 1880 at an abandoned Franciscan friary in Codogno, where today the Centro di Spiritualità 'Madre Cabrini' still stands. These Sisters aimed to enact God's love for people through their own compassionate action in the world.

While Mother Cabrini longed to go to China, she was encouraged by the famous words of Pope Leo XIII '*Not to the east, but to the west*' towards the masses of Italian immigrants in the USA, many of whom were living in extreme poverty. It was this Pope who launched the modern development of Catholic social teaching with his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* on the respective rights and duties of employers and workers. In 1899, Mother Cabrini and six of her religious Sisters arrived in New York via steamship. They faced the same challenges experienced by many migrants today: there was nowhere to stay and they were unable to speak English. Despite the early difficulties, they went on to accomplish great things, founding schools, hospitals and orphanages while ministering to the practical and spiritual needs of immigrants from many different lands. Despite her fear of water, Mother Cabrini sailed across the ocean 30 times, and she famously crossed the Andes mountain range on the back of a donkey.

By the time of her death in 1917, Mother Cabrini had established 67 institutions in North America, Central America and South America, as well as England, France, Spain and Italy. She became an inspiration to all whose lives she touched. In 1946, she was canonised (the first citizen of the USA to be made a Saint). In 1950, Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini was proclaimed Universal Patroness of Immigrants by Pope Pius XII. Today, the Cabrini Sisters' mission reaches around the world with a presence in 16 countries including Australia.

The Cabrini story in Australia began in Melbourne in the midst of the post-war migrant influx. In 1948, at the request of Archbishop Daniel Mannix, ten Cabrini Sisters arrived at Essendon aerodrome from Italy to take over St Benedict's, a small private hospital in Malvern previously owned by the Mercy Sisters. It was renamed Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini Hospital in 1958. The development of Cabrini Health in Australia is a story of courage and determination; that first group of Sisters laid the foundation for the comprehensive healthcare service provided today.

The next few years mark several milestones for the Cabrini Sisters in Australia:

- 2016 marks the 70th anniversary of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini being canonised;
- 2017 is the centenary of her death; and
- 2018 marks the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the first ten Cabrini Sisters in Australia.

May Mother Cabrini's example inspire all to show kindness and compassion towards strangers and those in need, especially those, who through no fault of their own, have been dislocated from their homelands.

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFMConv DD
*Bishop of Parramatta, Bishop Delegate For Migrants & Refugees*

# Message From Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFMConv DD

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Once again, Pope Francis has proved to be the pope of surprises. On his way back to the Vatican from the Greek island of Lesbos recently, he brought with him 12 Syrian refugees, all of whom are Muslim and had their homes destroyed by war. By doing so, he wanted to make a symbolic gesture of welcome to the refugees and encouraged Christians and indeed all people of good will to do the same. Earlier, he had made a joint statement with Patriarch Bartholomew, pledging to work for peace and to promote a humane resolution to the humanitarian crisis in Europe.

This is the international context for this year's Migrant and Refugee Sunday which will be celebrated on August 28th in Australia. Although we are far removed from the crisis, we are challenged to open our hearts to the sufferings of others. Compassion –which literally means to suffer with- is the hallmark of Christianity. In keeping with the Jubilee Year of Mercy, the Holy Father has chosen as its theme: *'Migrants and Refugees challenge us: The Response of the Gospel of Mercy'.*

The Pope acknowledges that often refugees and people who flee their homes in search of a safe and better future challenge individuals and communities, and their traditional ways of life; at times they even upset the cultural and social horizons which they encounter. This has been evident during the Syrian refugee crisis. Many European countries closed their borders because of the overwhelming humanitarian crisis at their doorsteps as well as the potential conflict that the influx of refugees might pose to their societies. Against such a backdrop of fear, Pope Francis encourages us to see refugees and migrants not as a threat but as our brothers and sisters in the human family. Affirming our Christian duty of care for them in the face of rising intolerance, the Pope writes *"Today, more than in the past, the Gospel of mercy troubles our consciences, prevents us from taking the suffering of others for granted, and points out way of responding which, grounded in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, find practical expression in works of spiritual and corporal mercy".*

As Christians, our attitude towards those in need is formed by our own experience of God's love and mercy. We can show them the love and mercy of God precisely because we ourselves are the recipients of the same love and mercy. Our encounter and acceptance of others are intertwined with the encounter and acceptance of God himself. Welcoming others means welcoming God in person! Pope Francis admonishes us: *"Do not let yourselves be robbed of the hope and joy of life born of your experience of God's mercy, as manifested in the people you meet on your journey."*

Friends, we stand united with one another, with men and women of good will in working for the coming of the Kingdom. We stand united with Pope Francis who has given us a strong leadership on the care of asylum seekers and refugees. His words and gestures at Lesbos inspire us to speak and act in favour of God's poor for whose cause we will be judged. *"As you did it to the least of these, you did it unto me"*(Matthew 25:40). These words of Jesus teach us to see the face of the Incarnate God in our asylum seeking brothers and sisters. It is our duty, as Pope Francis says, to replace indifference with compassion, ignorance with respect and suspicion with love.

With many newly arrived migrants and refugees in our midst, I encourage you to enact the culture of encounter, welcome and acceptance in practical, personal and communal ways. Many parishes and organisations are actively assisting the 12,000 additional refugees from Syria and Iraq. It is a great opportunity for us to make a difference and to influence government policies in relation to refugees and

asylum seekers.

As Christians, we cannot remain content with the status quo, especially when that status quo is less than what God wants for us as individuals and as a community. Australia is a wonderful country but where it is in terms of its treatment of asylum seekers should galvernise us into action. We cannot be his disciples if we ignore the plight of the marginalised and the vulnerable. We cannot be salt and leaven if we allow our Christian conscience to be desensitized by the inequality, injustice and inhumanity in our society and in the world.

With the men and women of goodwill, let us build a better Australia and a better world. May our endeavour to replace the culture of fear and indifference with that of encounter and acceptance be brought to fulfilment in accordance with God's vision of the fullness of life for all humanity.

In this kit you will find various resources to assist parishes, schools and individuals to prepare for Migrant and Refugee Sunday.

Following on from last year's article on Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, who was declared by Pope St John Paul II as universal father to migrants and refugees, this year we have included an article about St Frances Xavier Cabrini, universal patron to immigrants. In the lead up to the centenary of her death in January 2017, we have taken this opportunity to present a synopsis of her life and her influence to immigrants travelling to the United States of America. In fact much of her influence is still present with schools and streets named after her in New York City.

I would like to encourage all communities and schools to adopt both Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini and St Frances Xavier Cabrini as patron saints to intercede for us whenever we gather as communities to pray for and with migrants and refugees.

Also included are reflections on the Psalms of Mercy by priests, religious and lay people working in the field of pastoral care for migrants and refugees. These are for use in the week prior to Migrant and Refugee Sunday in schools and parishes, for private or communal prayer and reflection.

You will also find an interview with Archbishop Nona, Chaldean Bishop of St Thomas in Australia. Archbishop Nona, before being appointed to Australia, was the last Archbishop of Mosul in Iraq. Here he tells us of the situation in Iraq as well as how this is the first time in two thousand years that there are no Christians on the Nineveh Plains in Iraq, a truly sad and poignant moment in the history of Christianity.

To assist with Mass on Migrant and Refugee Sunday, a set of prayers of the faithful have been provided as well as a reflection on the readings for Migrant and Refugee Sunday by Fr Gabriele Bentoglio, Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

I hope that the contents of this Kit will provide a source of reflection within our communities for this upcoming Migrant and Refugee Sunday 2016.

Bishop Vincent Long OFMConv
Bishops' Delegate for Migrants and Refugees

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# Mercy as Policy

## Reflections on the Year of Mercy and Migrant and Refugee Sunday

On 28 August 2016, the Catholic Church in Australia will celebrate Migrant and Refugee Sunday. Pope Francis, in keeping with the theme for the Jubilee Year of Mercy, brings to the forefront the connection between the issues that migrants and refugees face and the message from the Gospel of Mercy.

Since 8 December 2015, Pope Francis has presented to us examples of how to live mercifully in our everyday lives. For us to know that, because God forgives us when we humbly approach Him, we also must forgive and be merciful to others.

Fundamentally, Pope Francis wants the Jubilee Year of Mercy to be about encountering God, the merciful Father, in ever-new ways. As such, this Year of Mercy is providing us with an opportunity to 'encounter', to connect with others, in particular those with whom we would not normally associate. Pope Francis therefore has also been presenting to us, in different ways, how we ought to be treating our brothers and sisters in Christ, in particular those least among us.

For us Catholics, during this Year of Mercy, there are important questions that we should be asking ourselves. How do we, as Catholics, respond to God's mercy and love? Are we open to Mercy in our lives? Is our relationship with the Heavenly Father visible in the way we treat those around us, in particular the most vulnerable?

Our relationship with God, in order for it to be authentic, ought to trickle down and affect our relationship with others. This encounter with the Merciful Father must also be an encounter with 'others', in particular those who are the least among us and live at the peripheries and margins of our society. In a special way, to encounter migrants and refugees both within our communities but also those abroad.

Being a Catholic is not something we do only on Sundays. It is a lived experience every day of our lives. Likewise on Migrant and Refugee Sunday. We should not simply harbour warm feelings and express solidarity with migrants and refugees on this day alone. We should use this Sunday as a platform where we in our Christian lives can bring to prayer and to the wider community the issues which migrants and refugees face, as well as all the good-news stories and blessings which migrants and refugees also bring.

Drawing on the theme of the current Jubilee Year of Mercy for his message for Migrant and Refugee Sunday, Pope Francis draws our attention to the treatment of refugees globally and in our local communities, challenging us by asking whether our response towards migrants and refugees is grounded in mercy. That is, the mercy which God has shown us first.

Pope Francis says, *"Today, more than in the past, the Gospel of mercy troubles our consciences, prevents us from taking the suffering of others for granted, and points out a way of responding which, grounded in the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity, find practical expression in works of spiritual and corporal mercy."*

These words from Pope Francis ought to motivate us to identify with those in our community who are in need of strength and consolation. Many of the hardships we face in our everyday lives can be exacerbated for recently arrived migrants in our communities. They often experience a deep sense of loneliness, anxiety and fear. Many come from distant and different cultures, where one's way of life can be completely different. These differences add to those feelings of anxiety, loneliness and fear. It is precisely in these situations that we need to be witnesses to the Gospel of Mercy and show a caring hand to those around us.

It is about moving beyond ourselves. The world around us is becoming more and more selfish and self-centred. We have become an inward looking society. Christ, throughout his teachings in the Gospels, demonstrates that to live authentic Christian lives we need to be outward looking. Grounding ourselves in prayer, as Jesus did when he took those moments during his ministry to pray alone, and from there spread the Good News, as the Apostles did in the early church.

It is often the simplest of things that can make the biggest of differences for migrants and refugees in our community; a simple smile, a short conversation after mass or at the shops, asking how they are, and if everything is ok. These little moments should not be underestimated. This is the beginning of encounter that the Holy Father is asking from us. It is from here that we move forward together in solidarity.

As Pope Francis notes, "*Migration movements are now a structural reality, and our primary issue must be to deal with the present emergency phase by providing programmes which address the causes of migration and the changes it entails, including its effect on the makeup of societies and peoples.*"

Mass movements of people escaping violence and persecution are an objective and unavoidable reality. As such, we ought not to get stuck in debating issues which prevent us from embracing this reality, and look towards concrete ways to help our brothers and sisters who are in need. We must always maintain at the forefront of all discussion and debate the need to put people first.

Pope Francis indicates a way forward. He argues that we need to invest in mercy as an appropriate policy noting that mercy, in fact *"nourishes and strengthens solidarity towards others"* which translates into very concrete attitudes such as "*Concern for fostering good relationships with others and the ability to overcome prejudice and fear [which] are essential ingredients for promoting the culture of encounter, in which we are not only prepared to give, but also to receive from others. Hospitality, in fact, grows from both giving and receiving*".

Mercy opens alternative ways to view 'the other'. Pope Francis indicates that, all too often, migrants are viewed as liabilities and, as such, they may be categorised as irregular or regular, as legal or illegal and as refugees or economic migrants. This categorising contributes to prejudice, fear and, ultimately, rejection. A policy of Mercy instead contributes towards a change in 'categorisation', where those categories mentioned above change to, "*dignity to be protected, people who are capable of contributing to progress and the general welfare*". Pope Francis does not advocate for a unilateral responsibility, that of simply opening all the doors, rather, he invites migrants to become responsible contributors towards a culture of encounter. This is especially the case when migrants responsibly assume their obligations towards those who receive them, gratefully respecting the material and spiritual heritage of the host country, obeying its laws and helping with its needs.

Mercy as an alternative policy opens the way to view migrants not merely for their political and legislative aspects, their economic implications and the concrete coexistence of various cultures in one territory. These become necessary and complementary aspects. Mercy as a policy has the inner strength to look for a way forward renewing and transforming the whole of humanity.

As Christian communities, we need to be able to ask ourselves several questions and reflect on our responses and their implications.

Firstly: WHO?
It is important that our communities be prepared to welcome. Do we know who is arriving?

Secondly: WHY?
Do we know why they are arriving? What are the factors that push people out of their own country, away from their own families? Do we have an understanding of the causes of forced migration?

Thirdly: WHAT?
Are we interested to know their stories? Are we humble enough to ask what they need? We tend to immediately supply material needs (which are indeed necessary); however, do we ask about their families left behind? Their hopes for the future? What they wish for?

Fourthly: HOW?
Following the announcement from the then Prime Minister Tony Abbot that Australia was ready to receive 12000 Refugees from Syria and Iraq, the Catholic Church together with many other communities expressed a readiness to welcome them and help their process of settlement. This is not merely an act to help the Government's policy, rather, this is a concrete action in the pastoral journey of welcoming.

Fifthly: WITH
A process of welcoming is not meant to rescind the memory of home country. The Church reiterates that the primary right of every human person with regard to their dignity is the right not to migrate. Nations have an obligation to address the factors causing emigration and to commit to a

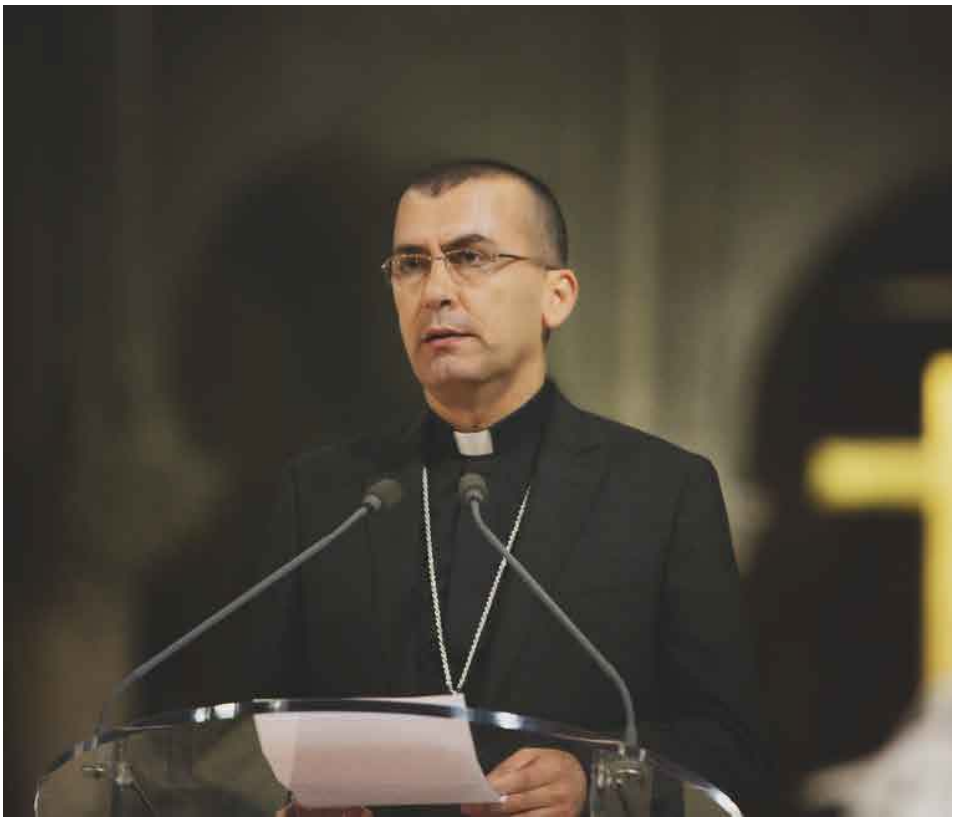
multilateral process aimed to guaranteeing a life free from oppression, persecution and economic restraints so that people are not forced to flee. Dioceses are also called to strengthen their missionary international collaboration in dialogue with the Church's structures present in the countries of emigration, by effectively, for example, supporting initiatives offering realistic options for people to remain at home.

*"Migrants are our brothers and sisters in search of a better life, far away from poverty, hunger, exploitation and the unjust distribution of the planet's resources which are meant to be equitably shared by all. Don't we all want a better, more decent and prosperous life to share with our loved ones?"* This question by Pope Francis is a confronting and challenging question for all of us.

This annual recurrence of Migrant and Refugee Sunday occurs during our journey of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. This is not only an occasion to celebrate the fact that Australia is graced by the life, work and gifts of generations of migrants; but also an occasion to grow in the awareness of the global phenomena of people on the move and relative policies. The biblical understanding of a Jubilee Year is always characterised by concrete actions of liberation and charity. Thus, this Jubilee Year of Mercy becomes for Christians an opportunity for an examination of conscience, *"As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God's action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living."* (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 9)

I would encourage you, therefore, to read and reflect on the Holy Father's message for migrants and refugees. Taking it to prayer and then within yourselves and your communities develop ways in which we can all better help our brothers and sisters, in particular those who have come across the seas for we *"cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison"* (cf. *Mt* 25:31-45) (MV, 15)

ACMRO Team



Archbishop Amel S. Nona DD.
*Eparch of St Thomas The Apostle of Sydney of the Chaldeans*

# The Catholic Church in Syria and Iraq - Interview with Archbishop Nona

In June 2014 the Diocese of Mosul was wiped out. 'I left along with 120,000 Christians. We left the city and the surrounding region because we did not want to convert to Islam or to be under the control of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)', the former Archbishop of Mosul, Amel Shamon Nona, told the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in advance of Migrant and Refugee Sunday to be celebrated on 28 August 2016.

Prior to 2003, 30,000 Chaldeans lived in the city of Mosul. However, by the time Archbishop Nona was installed as the Archbishop in January 2010, only two thousand Chaldeans remained. About the Chaldean community there, he reflected that, 'they are a very strong group'. While suffering persecution, 'they give up everything in their life but not their Christian faith'.

'I lived in Mosul until ISIS came and took over the city in 2014. That was a turning point. Prior to 2003, Mosul was the second largest diocese in Iraq. However after 2003, it became an increasingly dangerous place for Christians to live.'

'Almost all Christians left Mosul around this time and now most of these people are living in difficult situations. Some moved to the North of Iraq but approximately 40,000 now reside in Turkey, 10,000 in Jordan and 8,000 in Lebanon.' However exact numbers are not known.

Many want to come to Australia because they believe there is no hope in their country where they live in refugee camps and other public places because they have nothing left after 'fleeing from their land, their home and other possessions'.

'In the big cities like Baghdad, Christians are an easy target for extremists to kill or have their property taken.' Christians are an 'easy target for terrorists', if someone from another religion wants something from a Christian, 'it is easy to trick them by saying that they have to leave their house or will be killed.' Despite such threats, 'these families came to church on Sundays to celebrate Mass, a testament to their faith.'

Other minorities have also been targeted in the Middle East such as the Jewish community. 'The Jewish community had been in Iraq from the 6th Century BC. There were many families in Baghdad of Jewish background, but in 2003 they left Iraq. If the situation in Iraq continues, there will be no minority groups, Christians and Jews, left.'

Born on 1 November 1967, Archbishop Nona was ordained a priest on 11 January 1991 and began his ministry as parish priest of Alquoch. In 2000 he was sent to Rome, Italy for further studies and returned to Iraq in 2005, ministering as parish priest as well as a professor at Babel College. On 22 January 2010, he was elected and installed as Archbishop of Mosul, Iraq after the kidnapping and killing of Archbishop Mar Paulos Faraj Rahho in 2008. On 15 January 2015, Archbishop Nona was appointed Archbishop of Saint Thomas the Apostle of Sydney, Chaldean Eparchy of Oceania at age 47 years.

Reflecting on his experiences, Archbishop Nona, said that he doesn't think he will ever be able to return to Mosul because of what has happened to Christians there, they no longer feel a part of the city. In years to come, however, the situation may change.

'Now is a crucial time for Christians in Iraq, because so many of our people fled there may not be any Christians in Iraq in the future.' Life in Iraq is a very difficult at the moment, 'you have no right to your personal freedom or democracy. This is the underlying reason why innocent people are fleeing from Iraq seeking safety.'

The conflict in Iraq between the Sunni and Shia forces makes it difficult for those trying to live in-between these groups. The religion of Islam is also problematic when it becomes fundamental. 'The regular killings make life in Iraq dangerous.'

'Muslims in the Middle East can live in a safe environment because the laws and the system in Iraq are based on their religion of Islam. However, it can also be difficult for some Muslims because there are extreme groups that don't accept any criticism of Islam.'

Archbishop Nona acknowledges that there will be changes in the country, however any changes that do occur only happen with war or blood. There is always conflict or other people using weapons against others. I think there will be a change in such Muslim countries in the future but it will not happen anytime soon.'

Commenting on the rise of radical extremism leading to the persecution and murder of innocent Christians, Archbishop Nona said, 'I do not think that Iraq and Syria will be one nation in the future, they may possibly split into more than one country. There is no solution for Christians in these countries because they are a minority. Some Muslims are willing to use weapons and have a desire for war. They know that Christians will not use weapons.'

The war in Syria is catastrophic and the tragedy continues to unfold daily. Archbishop Nona sees the need for international policy rather than self-interest to be the guiding factor in decision making and for the international community to work together to end the war. 'The Middle East is a rich area, there is international interest in the country including interest from Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Religious tensions also bring dangerous conflicts within Iraq.'

Australia is part of this international community to which the Archbishop sees potential. 'It is not easy for one country to do something. Different countries must work together. The Australian Army and many Australian soldiers are in Iraq training the Iraqi army, which is a good thing.' 'Other ways that the Australian Government can help is by putting pressure on the international community to find solutions to the current situation in Iraq and Syria.'

'In September 2015, the Australian government committed to welcoming 12,000 refugees to Australian shores. However this has not happened. Whenever we ask about the issue,

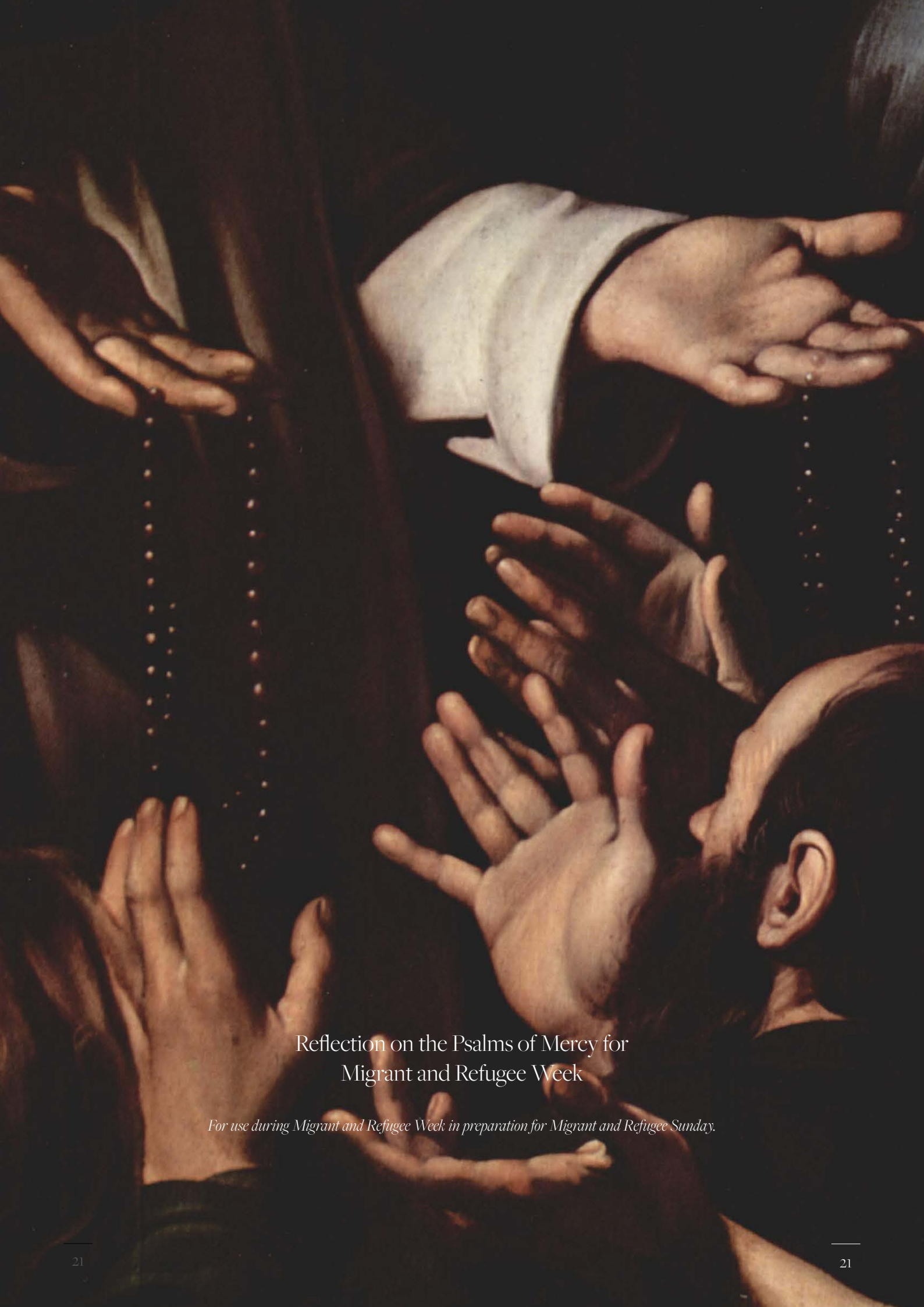
we are told there are security concerns. We know that Christians are peaceful people who will integrate well into Australian society. Therefore the Australian Government should do more to accommodate these refugees. Australia is a big country and does not have the issues that Europe is facing.'

As Catholics, we need to see refugees as human beings rather than a political security risk. We should show a more human side in facing this issue. 'I acknowledge that the Australian Bishops Conference provided pastoral support and financial assistance to the Iraqi Christian people in 2014 and 2015.'

'It is very important that Christians living in Australia are true to their faith. We must live as Christians and not be unsure of our faith because we have the privilege and freedom to live as Christians in Australia. It is important that we do this for the Iraqi Christians and those persecuted in parts of the Middle East.'

'To Christians in Australia, I say do not be afraid of the challenges this brings. Be brave and face them with strength. Christians should teach about respecting life in Australia and in the Western world.'

'Pope Francis describes a "globalisation of indifference", I think this is a malignant cancer in our society. We as Christians must give witness to our mission and not be indifferent to what is happening around us.'



# Reflection on the Psalms of Mercy for Migrant and Refugee Week

*For use during Migrant and Refugee Week in preparation for Migrant and Refugee Sunday.*



21

# Psalm 41:1-7 Monday

*Assurance of God's Help and a Plea for Healing*

By: Fr. Roger Manalo, Parish Priest Mater Christi Parish Seaton, South Australia

**Happy are those who consider the poor,**
**The Lord delivers them in the day of trouble.**
**The Lord protects them and keeps them alive;**
**they are called happy in the land.**
**you do not give them up to the will of their enemies.**
**The Lord sustains them on their sickbed;**
**in their illness you heal all their infirmities**

**As for me, I said, 'O Lord, be gracious to me;**
**heal me, for I have sinned against you.'**
**My enemies wonder in malice**
**when I will die, and my name perish.**
**And when they come to see me, they utter empty words,**
**while their hearts gather mischief;**
**when they go out, they tell it abroad.**
**All who hate me whisper together about me;**
**they imagine the worst for me.**

**Reflection**

We realize that the world will not be totally free from poverty, sickness, affliction, persecution and violence and there will always be people in need of help. Psalm 41 tells us that the Lord will consider their case and will send due supplies to help them. The psalm begins by saying *"blessed is the one concerned for the poor"* and here in Australia we are blessed to have peace and prosperity that so many people are longing for. The assurance of God's help to the most vulnerable that this psalm talks about will be made possible and visible through us. The psalm assures us that the Lord will deliver us in times of trouble as we show mercy and love to others. This is a commendation for those who are compassionate and merciful to their brothers and sisters.

**Prayer**

Merciful Father,
Look with mercy on our brothers and sisters who live as migrants and refugees.
May they find welcome and a home away from home here in the vast Australian land.
Bless those who work and minister to help the migrants and refugees.
May setbacks and oppositions not discourage them in their endeavors.
Assure them of your merciful love and reward them with your abundant love.
Help us, O Father, to be as merciful as you.
May we offer them the welcome and assistance they desperately need.
May your mercy help us to create a world where no one is a stranger and excluded.
We ask this through your merciful son Jesus. Amen.

# Psalm 42:1-5 Tuesday

*Longing for God and His Help in Distress*

By: Staff at Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care, Archdioce of Brisbane

**As a deer longs for flowing streams,**
**so my soul longs for you, O God.**
**My soul thirsts for God,**
**for the living God.**
**When shall I come and behold**
**the face of God?**
**My tears have been my food**
**day and night,**
**while people say to me continually,**
**"Where is your God?"**

**These things I remember,**
**as I pour out my soul:**
**how I went with the throng,**
**and led them in procession to the house of God,**
**with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,**
**a multitude keeping festival.**
**Why are you cast down, O my soul,**
**and why are you disquieted within me?**
**Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,**
**my help and my God.**

**Reflection**

Psalm 42 speaks of a suffering soul looking for God; a feeling of sinking, of being pinned down; a longing for God's salvific presence. This psalm of lament expresses a crying out to God in difficult circumstances and a discovering of hope in adversity; an assurance that with God there is always light after darkness, a sanctuary even in exile.

UNHCR counted over one million arrivals to Europe by sea last year predominantly in Italy and Greece via the Mediterranean. Of these, 3,700 were recorded missing or believed drowned. The exodus continues. There is turmoil in the body, mind and spirit of each and every refugee fleeing conflict and persecution. There is despair in each and every migrant's desperate attempt to secure a dignified future.

We live in a world of immediate access to information on global events. We sit comfortably in our lounge rooms and in our meeting rooms as passive perpetrators to the turmoils of the world: forced mass migrations, wars, riots, bombings, terrorism and human misery. We watch and we talk. We feel a warm fuzzy emphatic feeling and a desire to change things for the unfortunate ones. We cheer and rally behind the tireless efforts of those who take risks putting compassion to action. Then we switch off, because we have our own personal problems too. Fair enough. We experience a 'compassion overload'. We become desensitised. We become indifferent.

As Psalm 42 ends in praise of God, we turn to God for hope and conversion. In the face of indifference and hard-heartedness to refugees and people seeking asylum, we pray to become people of compassion, mercy and action.

**Prayer:**

**Let us pray.**
God of tenderness and compassion, look upon your people, created in your image
and pour your saving love into the brokenness and imperfections of our lives.
Protector of migrants and itinerants, assist all men, women, and children who are forced to flee their lands in search of a future and for hope.
Refuge of sinners, obtain the conversion of heart for those who generate war, those who fuel hate, those who make money out of someone else's poverty.

Mother of mercy, ask forgiveness for us who, blinded by selfishness, self-interest and fear of the other, have become distracted towards the needs and sufferings of our brothers and sisters.
We ask you to touch this day all those caught in the cycle of exile, of the relentless comings and goings and not knowing where to stay or belong.

We pray for ourselves, that we may not be silent in the face of other people's suffering, that we may see in the faces of all people your image, loving God, and commit ourselves to work for the good of everyone.
Come Holy Spirit, breath of God, as you breathed on the world in the beginning, breath on us now and renew the face of the earth.
*Amen.*

# Psalm 51:1-12 Wednesday

*Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon*

By: Fr. Ciril Bozic OFM Episcopal Vicar for Migrants and Refugees, Archdioces of Melbourne

**Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;**
**According to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.**
**Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,**
**And cleanse me from my sin.**

**For I know my transgressions,**
**And my sin is ever before me.**
**Against you, you alone, have I sinned,**
**And done what is evil in your sight,**
**So that you are justified in your sentence**
**And blameless when you pass judgement.**
**Indeed, I was born guilty,**
**A sinner when my mother conceived me.**

**You desire truth in the inward being;**
**Therefore teach me wisdom in my sacred heart.**
**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;**
**Was me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**
**Let me hear joy and gladness;**
**Let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.**
**Hide your face from my sins,**
**And blot out all my iniquities.**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God,**
**And put a new and steadfast spirit within me.**
**Do not case me away from your presence,**
**And do not take your holy spirit from me.**
**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,**
**And sustain in me a willing spirit.**

**Reflection**

It is for a Divine teaching that God has educated the people of the Old Testament throughout the centuries, presenting to them the reality of sin through experiences of: guilt, fault and evil actions. However this has always been done in order to point out that which is essential: That which is evil in His sight is a betrayal of the God who loves us.

So many people today are in Exile also; not just migrants, refugees and asylum seekers but also people in Exile from God. For certain people, Christians included, the word 'sin' is out of date. Sin is only a weakness of our nature or the product of evil social structures. David's Psalm 51 is teaching us that to recognize the 'sin' in our lives is to enter into the truth: You desire truth in the heart! The cry to God to give us a pure heart will be the expression of our faith. Where a pure heart is, there is always acceptance and welcoming of God, our Creator and then you and I can recognize in every face a brother or sister.

Restoring to us the joy of salvation are the words of Pope Francis during his first Angelus after his election as Pope, "... feeling mercy, that this word changes everything. This is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just."

The motto of this extraordinary jubilee year of mercy, Merciful like the Father, is an invitation to follow the merciful example of God who asks us not to judge or condemn but to offer love and forgiveness; to accept God's mercy and to offer mercy to others.

Restoring to me the joy of salvation is, in the words of the Pope Francis, *"Feeling mercy, that this word changes everything. This is the best thing we can feel: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just."* (First Angelus message after Francis' election).

The motto of this extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy; Merciful like the Father, is an invitation to follow the merciful example of God who asks us not to judge or condemn but to offer love and forgiveness instead; to accept God's mercy and to offer mercy to others.

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ show us your face and we shall be saved.

Lord, we bring before your mercy all those people who are forced into exile; especially those who are in exile because of their faith.

Lord, open our eyes that we may see when we become the cause of exile for other people; Teach us how to give a name to the sin which is at the origin of any exile so that we may discover the truth and the beauty of the journey back home.

Lord, teach us to recognise the times in which our sin causes scandal to the little ones, pushes people away from your Church and impedes the seed of the Gospel from growing and being made visible through our good deeds.

Lord, hearten our courage to speak the truth so that people may find the way back home. Teach us to unmask the truth of our egoism that causes people to be in exile from their land, from their people, from their faith; so that we create a home through our relationship with you and with our brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus, offer us a home where to find refuge from the spiritual, moral, political and war-provoked exiles that cause death.

Only you, God of mercy can be our home. Make of us also a home of freedom and life.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women
and blessed is  the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be
world without end. Amen.

# Psalm 57:1-5 Thursday

*Praise and Assurance under Persecution*

By: Sr. Nien Tran RSM, Multicultural Pastoral Service Team, Archdiocese of Adelaide.

**Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,**
**for in you my soul take refuge;**
**In the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,**
**Until the destroying storms pass by.**
**I cry to God Most High,**
**To God who fulfils his purpose for me.**
**He will send from heaven and save me,**
**He will put to shame those who trample on me**
**God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness**

**I lie down among lions**
**That greedily devour human prey;**
**Their teeth are spears and arrows,**
**Their tongues sharp swords.**

**Be exalter, O God, above the heavens.**
**Let your glory be over all the earth.**

**Reflection**

David is asking God for help. He asks God to be gracious and merciful on him. He wants God to be kind to him and save him from Saul. David says that he will hide under God's wing or God's protection, *"In the shadow of your wings I take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by."* This image which best symbolizes God's readiness to protect us in time of distress is the same image that Jesus used of God when weeping over Jerusalem: namely, that of a mother hen, who in times of danger, wants desperately to shelter her chicks under her wing.

This image would resonate deeply with those refugees and asylum seekers whose first concern is for their young children. The safety of their children is often the reason why they take risks that they do. God is like that mother hen which Jesus spoke of. God, who is mercy, knows our every need and wants to be our refuge in times of distress. How ready are we to really believe this?

David puts his absolute trust in God's Mercy and faithfulness. He knew that God was bigger than "the storms of destruction" that Saul or his enemies were preparing for him.

Do we know a story of someone who believed in God as absolutely as David did, and who was spared a particular "storm of destruction"? This may be the story of a refugee or someone we know – or indeed our own story!

We can all probably think of a dark time in our lives when we cried out in hope of for God's mercy or guidance and, looking back, can now see how God *"sent forth his mercy and his faithfulness"* either directly in the form of a special sign – like the burning bush for Moses, or the empty tomb for Jesus' disciples – or through someone who was a special gift to us in time of great need.

**Prayer**

God of love and compassion,
help us to trust in your mercy and faithfulness
when our lives are in trouble.
Help us to become true witnesses of your merciful love;
in our response to the cry of the poor,
in actions and in words.
Inspire us to have courage to be defenders of the oppressed,
especially for refugees and asylum seekers,
to prepare for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace and love.
Praise to you forever!
Amen.

# Psalm 119:81-88 Friday

*The Glories of God's Law*

By: Abbot Steele Hartman OCSO,
Abbot of Our Lady of Tarrawarra Abbey

**My soul languishes for your salvation;**
**I hope in your word.**
**My eyes fail with watching for your promise;**
**I ask, "When will you comfort me?"**
**For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke,**
**yet I have not forgotten your statutes.**
**How long must your servant endure?**
**When will you judge those who persecute me?**
**The arrogant have dug pitfalls for me,**
**they flout your law.**
**All your commandments are enduring;**
**I am persecuted without cause; help me!**
**They have almost made an end of me on earth;**
**but I have not forsaken your precepts.**
**In your steadfast love spare my life,**
**that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.**

## Reflection

Psalm 119 is a prolonged consideration of the gift of God's self-revelation in the Law. This revelation also teaches us about ourselves: how we are to act if we are to live in harmony with the God who has been revealed and how we are to pray. Our relationship with God, however, is conditioned by familiar circumstances and when these change – whether voluntarily or under duress – our contact with God is threatened. The Psalms teach us to speak out our difficulties to God, to find a new prayer in the land of exile, to find strength when circumstances appear hopeless. Even though, in the face of ongoing hostility and indifference, we are conscious that faith is wavering, our hope is struggling, and it seems that God's promises of comfort will never be fulfilled, we learn to be bold in our prayer, To speak our troubles to God. And so we cry out, *"In your mercy spare my life, that I may keep the testimonies of your mouth."*

## Prayer

Lord God,
you have been our refuge in times past,
but now you seem distant
and we are delivered into the hands of the godless;
and our faith is under siege from the ill will that surrounds us.
Lord God,
come to our assistance,
help us to find you in this time of trial
that we may experience for ourselves
the abundant mercy you have promised from of old.

We make this prayer in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

# Psalm 136:1-11 Saturday

*God's Work in Creation and in History*

By: Sr. Kylie Cullen VDMF,
Catholic Immigration Office, Archdiocese of Sydney

**O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever.**
**O give thanks to the God of gods,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever.**
**O give thanks to the Lord of lords,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**

**Who alone does great wonders,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**
**Who by understanding made the heavens,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**
**Who spread out the earth on the waters,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**
**Who made the great lights,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**
**The sun to rule over the day,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**
**The moon and starts to rule over the night,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**

**Who struck Egypt through their firstborn,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**
**And brought Israel out from among them,**
**For his steadfast love endures for ever;**

**Reflection**

Today's Psalm contains nothing but Praise. Praise for who God is; praise for what he is able to do, praise for what he has done in creation and praise for what he did in redeeming Israel from bondage.

In my work with people in the Sudanese community who now call Sydney home, I have repeatedly heard the women giving praise and saying, "I give thanks..." Thanks for the chance to start life anew, to receive an education, having the chance to learn English and thanks for the opportunity to express their faith so freely. These same women have lost family members to violence, suffered trauma, and experienced illness. Their own trauma is constantly reignited, yet they never stop in giving thanks to God.
We often lose sight of the individual and get caught up in numbers which become overwhelming. My friend is a mother, a daughter, and a widow. Her priority is in giving thanks every day to God who has given her everything.
In the Psalm God's mercy is repeated over and over again, reminding us that God's mercy is the rock that we can rely on. When all else is changing and insecure, we can still give thanks because his mercy never changes.

In our world that can sometimes be depressing and negative, we often forget to give thanks for what we have. How many times we can fall into the trap of believing that we don't have enough? This blinds us to seeing that we have so much to be grateful for.
This is a Psalm that each one of us can personalise today. In what do I have to give thanks for today? How can I reach out in mercy to my brothers and sisters?

**Prayer**

Dear Father, today I give thanks to you for your goodness and mercy.
Help me to live this day with an attitude of gratitude for whatever may come my way.
Help me to believe that everything that I will need to live today with mercy, peace, hope and love is found in you.
Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

# Reflection on the Readings for Migrant and Refugee Sunday

28 August 2016

Our readings for today, especially the first reading and the gospel, talk about humility and its importance.

What is humility?

I will tell you a story. Three persons were boasting to each other on who had the best Bible translation. The first said, *"Mine is the best translation because this is a New American Bible. This is being used in the Mass. The words used are modern and easy to understand."* The second man boasted, *"Mine is the best because this is Jerusalem Bible. Very poetic and it is used in our charismatic group meeting."* The third man said, *"I like the Bible translation of my mother because she translated it into her concrete life; she lives everything written on it."* The other two were silent.

The story summarizes the challenge of Jesus Christ in our gospel today. Jesus challenges us to translate the word of God into our daily lives. Challenging us to make the Bible alive in our hearts, minds and deeds. This is one way of being humble, and humility could be understood as a synonym of mercy.

Today this is indeed challenging, as we celebrate Migrants' Day following the guidelines given to us by Pope Francis in his Message delivered for this occasion on the theme: *Migrants and Refugees Challenge Us. The Response of the Gospel of Mercy.*

This message coincides with the celebration of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, strongly desired by Pope Francis. That is why the Papal Message puts in close connection the protagonists of the phenomenon of migration, migrants and refugees, but also the international community, both strongly invited to answer to this burning issue through the answer of the Gospel, which is condensed in the theme of mercy.

This year, Migrants' Day comes during one of the most critical moments in the history of contemporary migrations. In fact, we live in a phase in which the despair of millions of migrants and refugees has captured the attention of global public opinion. I mean the tragedy of mobility, especially that of forced mobility, and at the same time, the limits of the systems of protection of the international community.

Today the global phenomenon of human mobility changes its face very quickly, involving all areas of the world. Because so-called "mixed flows" are now a daily reality, it prevents the distinction between economic and forced migration.

The trafficking of women, men and children is growing atrociously, present in almost all countries of the world either as lands of origin, transit or destination for the victims. It is estimated that trafficking is currently the third source of income for organized crime, after drugs and weapons.

Pope Francis' Message speaks of this world.

In the document, the Pope reiterates the key principles of the Teaching of the Church on this matter, insisting on the dignity of every human person, regardless of its legal status. Special emphasis is given to what I would call the prophetic significance of migrants and refugees who, as stated in the text of the Message, *"challenge individuals and communities, and their traditional ways of life; at times they upset the cultural and social horizons which they encounter."*

In addition to recalling the duty of the international community and besides denouncing the lack of clear and workable regulations, the Message insists on the responsibilities of those who are mere spectators, witnessing the deaths of many sisters and brothers migrants and refugees. We can end up becoming accomplices of traffickers of human

beings, *"the tragic stories of millions of men and women daily confront the international community as a result of the outbreak of unacceptable humanitarian crises in different parts of the world. Indifference and silence lead to complicity whenever we stand by as people are dying of suffocation, starvation, violence and shipwreck. Whether large or small in scale, these are always tragedies, even when a single human life is lost."*

Urging greater attention to the causes of migration - beyond the management of emergencies - Pope Francis affirms the right not to emigrate, that is, to enjoy safe and decent living conditions in one's native country.

Although recognizing the consequences that migrations produce on the identity of both migrants and societies that receive them, the Holy Father underlines that the inter-cultural encounter may become an opportunity for a human, social and spiritual development of the whole society.

Again, encouraging the welcoming of foreigners in a style marked by biblical teaching, the Message warns that negative reactions arise if societies do not cultivate a true culture of encounter, not only based on "to give", but also on the availability "to receive".

Moreover, it seems to me particularly important that the Pope stresses the criterion of reciprocity for proper integration. In fact, in response to the hospitality that migrants and refugees receive, the Pope recommends that they meet the material and spiritual heritage of their host country. In doing so, migration highlights its extraordinary potential to transform positively the whole of humanity, focusing on the positive dynamics of inter-exchange on a cultural, social and even religious level.

In any case, it seems to me that the Pope calls attention to the premise that underlies these considerations, which must never be underestimated in addressing these elements of the migration story: *"all these complement the defence and promotion of the human person, the culture of encounter, and the unity of peoples, where the Gospel of mercy inspires and encourages ways of renewing and transforming the whole of humanity."*

Finally the Pope reaffirms the close link that exists between migration and the unequal distribution of the goods of the earth, in a context of global interdependence: *"solidarity, cooperation, international interdependence and the equitable distribution of the earth's goods are essential for more decisive efforts, especially in areas where migration movements begin, to eliminate those imbalances which lead people, individually or collectively, to abandon their own natural and cultural environment. In any case, it is necessary to avert, if possible at the earliest stages, the flight of refugees and departures as a result of poverty, violence and persecution."*

The Day of Migrants for this year, therefore, presents the response of the Gospel of mercy. We are invited to rediscover during this time of the Jubilee Year of Mercy a serious and concrete commitment to respond to the current migration phenomenon, especially when it comes to dramatic situations caused by injustice, selfishness and interests that destroy and cause death.

In today's gospel, Jesus teaches us through a parable about those who choose the high place at table when they are invited to a wedding banquet. They should not act as though they are the most important persons in the wedding hall; least they lost their chosen seats to guests that are more distinguished. The short narrative talks about humility which can be translated into mercy, solidarity and cooperation. These virtues, especially in the complex phenomenon of migration, help us to be able to accept life's trials and difficulties with open hands and be able to handle all those things.

In other words, today's readings invite us to welcome each other with our talents, abilities but also limitations or weaknesses. God creates us equal and no one is superior or inferior. It means that we should live a life that Jesus lived – a person for others. We therefore become truthful to others. We see today that everybody is competing to see who will be at the top. But we are called to touch the lives of others. We are the hands, the feet and the mouth of Jesus. Each one of us can become Christ for others. We should use our talents and gifts not for ourselves but for those who need them most, in particular migrants and refugees.

Fr. Gabriele Bentoglio, CS
*Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council*
*for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People*

# *Suggested Prayers of the Faithful*

**For the Church,**
For the Holy Church of God, Sacrament of communion: may she be a welcoming home where people from many nations and languages gather together and where diversity is contemplated in the unity of the Holy Trinity.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

**For Pope Francis and Bishops,**
Let us pray for the Holy Father Francis, for our Bishops and for all who minister in the Church that they may confirm us in the faith of the Lord and may favour effective pastoral care where migrants are made welcome and their experience valued.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

**For political leaders, legislators and those in public office,**
For our political leaders, legislators and all those entrusted with public responsibilities: that they may actively promote an integral human development of which migration is a striking phenomenon involving an increasing number of people, as well as the social, economic, political, cultural and religious challenges and opportunities it poses to nations and international communities.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

**For those who are forced to migrate because of persecution,**
Let us pray for all those who are forced to migrate because of persecution, war, violence, economic difficulties and other reasons. We pray for immigrants and refugees, for displaced people, for the victims of modern slavery and of human trafficking. May we find in the Gospel the incentive to promote by every means a culture of welcoming, strengthening and thus enabling our communities to become examples of a true peaceful coexistence.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

**For persecuted Christians,**
We pray for our Christian Sisters and Brothers who suffer persecution, destruction, death and the contempt for humanitarian law, and who are forced to leave their homes and communities in the Middle East and all over the World. We entrust to the power of the risen Lord every effort of good will and we pray that the cooperation of all will bear fruit in peace and initiate the building of a fraternal society respectful of the dignity and rights of each person.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

**For all migrants and those who minister to them,**
We pray, mindful of the floods of migrants and refugees, including many children, who flee war, hunger, poverty and social injustice. We pray also for those who minister to them that they may bear witness to the mercy of Christ without fear, prejudices and interest.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

**For the souls of the faithful departed,**
We pray in particular for all those who have passed away fleeing persecution searching for a better life. For those lost at sea, in particular the Mediterranean. May the face of Christ shine upon them.

Let us pray to the Lord
R: Lord hear our prayer

# Contacts

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### Brisbane

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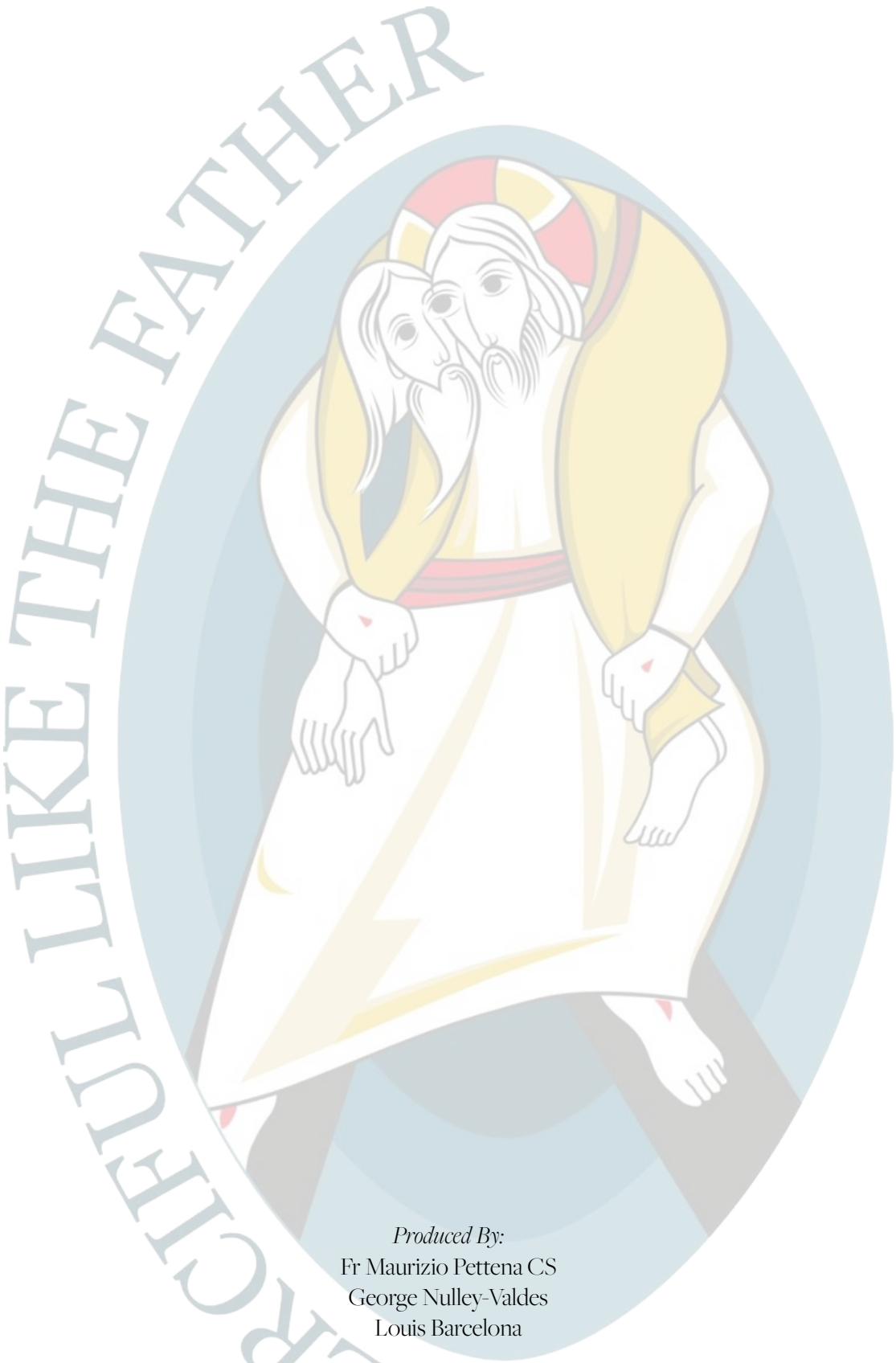


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