



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life



Australian Catholic
Migrant &
Refugee Office

Bishop Eugene Hurley (Chairman)
Bishop Joseph Grech
Bishop Justin Bianchini
Bishop Jeremiah Coffey
Bishop Gerard Hanna
Bishop Max Davis

22nd June 2007

Dear Friends,

Sunday 26th August 2007 will be celebrated in the Catholic Church in most parts of Australia as Refugee and Migrant Sunday. For local reasons, some dioceses may choose a different date. For the 2007 celebration, I wish to consider the unity in diversity of Australia's people, and in particular unity in diversity in the Church. We are reminded to thank God for the many different peoples in our Church, which includes peoples from many different countries, with different languages and customs.

Pope John Paul II

On his visit to Australia in 1986, Pope John Paul II said: *Australia is a land of many cultures.....a land of different ethnic groups, shaped by the traditions, attitudes and hopes of many people whose faith sustained them in the difficult task of making a new home in this continent....Out of a great deal of human misery and suffering, there is now emerging a nation filled with hope and promise. This is your history. This is the shaping of your culture as the people of Australia. In this story there is much of which to be proud.*

The need for multicultural Pastoral Care in Australia

With these words of the late Holy Father in mind, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference promoted a National Conference in November 2005 entitled "*One in Christ Jesus: Pastoral Care in a Culturally-Diverse Australia*" Following the Conference, an excellent document entitled *Graced by Migration* was prepared by Professor Des Cahill. This document contains fifty-one strategies based on the recommendations from the National Conference, and also an appendix giving guidelines for Parish Priests. It is currently being prepared for presentation to the Australian Catholic Bishops for their approval. The full draft document may be found on the website of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office at www.acmro.catholic.org.au

Graced by Migration tells us that, of the mainstream Churches in Australia, the Catholic Church has been the one most touched by migration. Since 1947, it has grown from 1.57 million to be Australia's largest faith community (5,001,833 people who represent 26.7 per cent of the Australian population). From the 2001 census (details are not yet available from the 2006 census) we learn that 26.33 per cent of the Catholic population had been born overseas. Equally importantly, approximately 40-45 per cent of the Australian Catholic people were either migrants or the sons or daughters of migrants. Migrants and Refugees can thus no longer be considered as additions or appendages, nor should they ever have been. Rather, they are an integral part of the Church. They are an integral part of the history of the Church in Australia. They are part of the Church as God's mystery of communion and community. They are part of the history of God's salvific and liberating action.

A National Plan for Pastoral Care in a Culturally-Diverse Australia.

It is therefore essential that we have a national plan for the provision of effective Pastoral Care in a culturally-diverse Catholic Church in Australia. This plan must have the vision to be “one in Christ Jesus” in obedience to the call of the Gospel. This vision must be one:

- That assists all newcomers and their families by welcoming them into the Church and Australian society. Newcomers may be refugees or asylum seekers, students or business people, tourists, in fact all people who have moved or are on the move.
- That helps them to sustain their cultural and religious customs and heritages.
- That integrates their cultural and linguistic gifts, their knowledge, their work and other skills, and their individual talents into the very heart of the Church and nation.
- That creates an Australia that is a harmonious society of justice and peace, welcoming its newcomers.

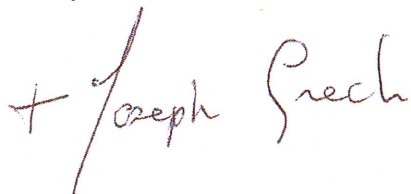
Implementation of a National Plan.

To implement a national plan for Pastoral Care in a culturally-diverse Church, the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life intends to address the fifty-one strategies from *Graced by Migration* which I have mentioned above. To facilitate this work, Father Maurizio Pettena, a Scalabrinian Missionary, has been appointed National Planning Assistant (half-time) to Monsignor John Murphy, Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office. Father Maurizio will assist the Director in this very important work.

The Holy Father’s message for 2007 – the Migrant Family.

The theme of Pope Benedict’s message for 2007 is *The Migrant Family*. You will receive a copy of the Holy Father’s message from the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office with this message from me. It will also be on the website www.acmro.catholic.org.au. The Holy Father adds another dimension to the need for pastoral care in a culturally-diverse Church – the needs of migrant families. In his message he says: *“if the migrant family is not ensured of a real possibility of inclusion and participation, it is difficult to expect its harmonious development”*.

I pray that the celebration of Refugee and Migrant Sunday will be a source of inspiration for you.



MOST REVEREND JOSEPH GRECH
Delegate for Migrants and Refugees
Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life