



Diocese of Sandhurst Chancery Office



7th July 2009

Dear Friends,

Greetings. Once again we are preparing to celebrate Migrant and Refugee Week (24th – 30th August 2009). A parish kit has again been prepared so that all of us can find the necessary help during this week to reflect, pray and give thanks for the multicultural diversity and richness which is so much part of the Catholic Church in our country.

This year, on the celebration of the 2000th anniversary of the birth of St Paul, which concluded on 29th June, the feast of Ss Peter and Paul, Pope Benedict's message for Migrant and Refugee Week reflects on St Paul Migrant, Apostle of the Peoples. The Pope notes that St Paul was born into a family of Jewish immigrants in Tarsus, Cilicia, that he was educated in the Hebrew and Hellenistic and Roman cultures and languages. After his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, although he did not deny his own traditions, and felt both esteem and gratitude to Judaism and the Law, he devoted himself without hesitation or second thought to his new mission, with courage and enthusiasm. Jesus became for him his *raison d'être* and the motive that inspired his apostolic dedication to the service of the Gospel. He changed from being a persecutor of Christians to being an Apostle of Christ.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, he spared no effort to see that the Gospel was proclaimed to all, making no distinction of nationality or culture. On his apostolic journeys, in spite of meeting with constant opposition, he first proclaimed the Gospel in the synagogues, giving prior attention to his compatriots. If they rejected him he would address the Gentiles, making himself an authentic "missionary to migrants" - as a migrant and an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Paul was truly a migrant and an apostle for all people.

This year, Migrant and Refugee Week will also help us to prepare for an important Conference on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees which will be held in Sydney on October 28th and 29th, with an extra day for Migrant Chaplains on October 27th. Information about this conference has already been sent to Bishops, Leaders of Religious Congregations, Catholic Schools Commissions, Migrant Chaplains and Catholic Immigration Offices. In late July, a call will be made for Conference registrations, with a closing date of Monday September 14th.

Attendees at the Conference will have the opportunity to contribute to the final preparation of a plan for the National Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees in a culturally diverse society and Church in Australia. The theme of the Conference is "Enlarge the site of your tent", based on a quotation from the Prophet Isaiah "*Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back ...*" Is 54, 2 (NRSV).

I take this opportunity, on behalf of the Bishops of Australia to thank all volunteers, members of parishes and associations, priests, religious and men and women who minister so wonderfully and courageously to migrants, refugees and people on the move in our country. I also thank in a special way all migrants and refugee brothers and sisters who share their faith, experience and life with us.

May all of us, though many become more and more "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:4)

[signed]

Most Reverend Joseph Grech
Delegate for Migrants and Refugees
Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life