



Message from Bishop Hanna

Dear friends,

This year the theme Pope Benedict XVI has chosen to celebrate migrant and refugee week is “Migrants and the New Evangelisation”. This theme is an excellent occasion to reflect on the many opportunities the global phenomenon of migration holds for evangelisation and how it has impacted on Australia. We also take this opportunity to celebrate the wonderful contribution our brothers and sisters from all over the world have made to the Catholic Church in Australia.

The relationship between evangelisation and migration is best captured in the instruction of Jesus “*go and make disciples of all nations*” (Mt 28:19). The instruction explicitly calls for both movement and evangelisation. This instruction is best exemplified by St Paul ‘*a migrant by vocation*’ who set out from Antioch, crossed the seas of the Near East and travelled the roads of Europe until he reached Rome.¹ Since the time of St Paul, migration has always served as a vehicle for transmitting the faith and for the evangelization of whole countries.² Through migration the word of God has spread to all nations by people on the move who took the Gospel with them. “*Often, flourishing Christian communities started out as small colonies of migrants which, under the leadership of a priest, met in humble buildings to hear the Word of God and to beg Him for courage to face the trials and sacrifices of their difficult life.*”³ *The Church exists in order to evangelise*⁴ and migration ensures this mandate reaches new people, cultures and nations.

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *St Paul Migrant, “Apostle of the peoples”* World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2009.

² Pope John Paul II *Because of Migration, People Who Had No Heard the Good News, Learned About the Faith and Often Appreciated and Embraced It*, For World Migrants’ Day 10 September 1989, n, 2.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Pope John Paul II *Catholic Laity and Migration*, For World Migrants’ Day 5 August 1987

Evangelisation is about educating people on how to listen to Christ and be able to recognise the signs of the presence of God. At its core, evangelisation is the missionary mandate handed down by Jesus through the scriptures. However, the New Evangelisation calls for new methods, forms, experiences, concrete gestures and pastoral approaches. These new measures are needed to respond to the new global situation.

The process of globalisation is bringing people ever closer together due to both the development of social communication and the frequency and ease at which people can move around the globe.⁵ Nearly all countries are now faced with the eruption of the migration phenomenon in one aspect or another; it affects their social, economic, political and religious life and is becoming more and more a permanent structural phenomenon (EMCC, 1). The scale of migration has significantly increased in number. There are over 214 million international migrants which represents around 3% of the seven billion people in the world. Many more migrate internally and many others are itinerant, constantly on the move.

The majority of migrants will arrive at destination countries which are presently ever more challenged by secularization.⁶ In this context migration presents both challenges and opportunities. The greatest challenge is for migrants who, having grown up among peoples characterized by and alive in their Christian faith, migrate to countries where the society has grown weary or feeble in their faith and practice of faith. *“Here the Church is faced with the challenge of helping migrants keep their faith firm even when they are deprived of the cultural support that existed in their country of origin.”*⁷ On the other hand, migration is an opportunity to rekindle the impact of Christ in communities of Christians of old and ancient traditions that perhaps have lost a little bit of their original enthusiasm. The vitality of faith that many new migrant groups bring can be a powerful witness providing the *“possibility of reawakening the dormant Christian conscience.”*⁸ Let us think, for example, of the faith and commitment to faith that we see in Australia from the enthusiasm of young Christian communities such as the South Sudanese Community or of the vibrancy of the communities from South America, the Philippines and Indonesia. Or of the faith of persecuted communities such as the Vietnamese and Chinese communities that we also have in Australia. Many of these persecuted people had to suffer and sometimes pay very dearly because of their faith. These people do not even need to talk about Jesus, simply seeing them and listening to their story and witnessing the impact of Christ in their life, is a powerful reminder that Christ is present and alive and calls for a decisive commitment in our life.

Migration also brings together Christians and Non-Christians, thus representing opportunities to share in words and deeds whom we believe and why we believe. Of the total number of global migrants, an estimated 106 million (49%) migrants are Christian and almost 60 million (27%) are Muslims. The remaining quarter is a mix of Hindus (5%), Buddhist (3%), Jews (2%), other faiths (4%) or the religiously unaffiliated (9%).⁹ It remains an often urgent duty

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, *Migration and the New Evangelization* World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2012.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Migration and the New Evangelization* World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2012.

⁹ Pew Research Centre *Faith on the Move* 8 March 2012.

for Catholics and Christians to begin *“the apostolate of first missionary evangelisation among those large numbers of immigrants who are not Christian.”*¹⁰

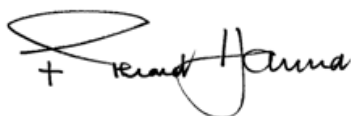
The colour and vibrancy of migrant communities can be seen in many of the photos in this year’s kit. However migration and the new evangelisation is not just about diversity and different cultures; more importantly it is about unity, the mingling of peoples, the coming together, and the meeting of people from all parts of the globe. This meeting of peoples is where evangelisation takes place. In some instances it will be the host community receiving migrants who will be the evangelisers and in other times it will be the migrants who bring with them the seeds of evangelisation.

Evangelisation in the context of migration is intrinsically linked to hospitality. Migration and the new evangelisation often takes place quite visibly when people care for and welcome new migrants into their faith communities. The effects of evangelisation are very practical and can be seen by looking at the many networks of charitable organisations in Australia which cover all various situations of poverty and need as well as education and health care. Evangelisation is always done by word and deeds (Acts 1:1; Mk 6:30). *“Actions, in fact, are the “active faith”, while words are the “eloquent faith”. Since there is no evangelization without, in consequence, charitable actions, there is no authentic charity without the spirit of the Gospel: they are two intimately linked aspects.”*¹¹

In migrants, Christians are called upon to seek Christ who knocks at our doors as it is written in the book of Revelations *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”* (Rev 3:20)

For migrants who arrive under precarious circumstances such as humanitarian entrants and those seeking asylum, *“the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ will be a source of relief, hope and ‘full joy’”* (cf. Jn 15:11).¹²

Yours sincerely in Christ



Most Rev Gerard Hanna DD
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¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *It is Just My Wish*, World Migrant’s Day 16 July 1985, 3.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *The Circumstances of Migrants*, World Migration Day 1997, 3.

¹² Pope Benedict XVI, *Migration and the New Evangelization* World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2012.