



## Message from Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv *Bishop Delegate for Migrants and Refugees*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Holy Father, Pope Francis, has chosen as the theme for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, *‘Welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating migrants and refugees’*.

Reflecting on his pontificate and global events in the last five years, the Holy Father reminds us of the urgent need to care for our displaced brothers and sisters, who have been forced to leave their homes for a better future. He makes the parable of the Last Judgment concrete by stating that every act of charity shown to migrants and refugees is an opportunity to encounter Christ.

We are challenged by the message of the Holy Father to consider how we can welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees in our own Australian context.

### To Welcome

Welcoming migrants and refugees in Australia begins with an open heart and an open mind. As the history of our nation has shown, there is mutual benefit for both newcomers and host communities as they grow in strength and solidarity. Understanding, supporting and journeying together will provide concrete foundations for social cohesion.

The Holy Father also speaks directly to the difficulties faced by refugees fleeing persecution. Where we must engage with governments and community leaders to offer “...broader options for migrants and refugees to enter destination countries safely and legally.” (Message of Pope Francis for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018). We are challenged to be open to look at options such as expanded family reunification, simpler humanitarian visa processes, and community sponsorship programs. We are reminded and challenged by the words of Pope Francis, quoting Pope Benedict XVI, that, we are obliged to “...always prioritise personal safety over national security.” Let us contribute, in our own ways and means, and seek new solutions for refugees fleeing persecution to find safety and peace.

### To Protect

Protecting migrants and refugees begins by “...defend[ing] the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, independent of their legal status.” (Message of Pope Francis for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018). People should have the right to be able to live in their home country in peace and prosperity. We must encourage, where possible, that people living in poverty, war, or persecution, be able to find peace in their homeland. We must work with governments and organisations to promote peace and prosperity in areas of poverty and conflict.

Migrants and refugees must also be protected in transit and once arrived in their destination country. This is where social cohesion and personal responsibility are integral. The Holy Father recently released the Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, on personal holiness. In the exhortation, Pope Francis reminds us that we are to attain holiness through works of mercy. We are challenged to desire and yearn for justice and righteousness, and “...cooperate to make that possible, even if we may not always see the fruit of our efforts.” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 77). Identifying and challenging racism or discrimination can be the beginning of protecting migrants and refugees in our communities. By breaking down obstacles and giving

them opportunities to become members of our communities, allowing them to flourish, we in turn contribute to social cohesion.

### **To Promote**

The Holy Father encourages us to make a "...determined effort to ensure that all migrants and refugees...are empowered to achieve their potential as human beings, in all the dimensions which constitute the humanity intended by its Creator." (Message of Pope Francis for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018). It is up to us, women and men of faith, to find opportunities to promote the welfare of migrants and refugees. In *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis reminds us that a thirst for justice and righteousness must extend into practical and concrete actions. To become holy, we must care for the material and spiritual welfare of our migrant brothers and sisters. We need to encourage them in becoming part of our communities - both our faith and social communities. Through making them feel welcome within our communities, we will sow the seeds for growth, thus allowing both them and us to flourish as one.

### **To Integrate**

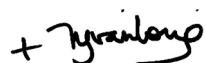
In integrating migrants and refugees, Pope Francis challenges us to find "...opportunities for intercultural enrichment...". (Message of Pope Francis for World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018). By combining the successful elements of both the migrants and refugees coming into Australia, with those successful elements of Australian culture, we are able to positively contribute to the vibrant multicultural fabric which makes up Australia. However, it is only through genuine encounter with 'the other' that we are able to learn from and contribute positively to society. Pope Francis challenges us to not remain behind our walls but to reach out and greet the stranger. By making those in the peripheries feel welcome, we can begin to positively encourage deeper unity within our communities. By learning from others, we are in turn able to teach about our journeys, struggles and successes. Through this ongoing exchange of cultures and ideas our society is only stronger as a result.

To conclude, I would also like to commend the work which many government and non-government agencies around the world are undertaking with the United Nations on the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration. Pope Francis, in his address to those present at the meeting for the members of the International Catholic Migration Commission, on 8 March 2018, said,

"...in order to set free those who today are oppressed, rejected, and enslaved, it is essential to promote open and sincere dialogue with government leaders, a dialogue that takes into account people's actual experiences, sufferings, and aspirations, in order to remind everyone once more of his or her responsibilities. The process set in motion by the international community for a global agreement on refugees, and another for safe, orderly, and regulated migration, represent a privileged forum for implementing such dialogue."

Fr Fabio Baggio, co-undersecretary to the Migrants and Refugees section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See, has written an article about the Church's contribution to the development of the Global Compacts and its pastoral implications. We are again reminded of the importance of the contribution that the Catholic Church can make, "together we must encourage countries to coordinate more suitable and effective responses to the challenges posed by issues of migration; and we can do this on the basis of the essential principles of the Church's social teaching." (Address by Pope Francis to the Members of the International Catholic Migration Commission, 8 March 2018). The Holy See has released a set of points guiding the discussion from a catholic perspective. I commend this document to you, which is available on the ACMRO's website, [www.acmro.catholic.org.au](http://www.acmro.catholic.org.au).

Yours in Christ,



Most Rev Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv  
Bishop Delegate for Migrants and Refugees