



**Message from Bishop Max L. Davis AM DD  
*Bishops' Delegate for Migrants and Refugees***

Migration and seeking refuge have been a part of human experience from the earliest times of recorded history. This movement can be provoked by a number of circumstances and at the base of it is living with and in the dignity that God has imbued in each person. Sometimes we move to seek a more suitable environment in which our inherent dignity can flourish further. Sometimes we move because threats to that dignity and personal safety are so great that another place must be found. From a religious and spiritual perspective, beginning in the Old Testament, this constant movement of persons and peoples is often part of a response to the call of God. This reflects the truth that, as the Catechism reminds us, "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because humankind is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw us to himself." (Catechism of Catholic Church, para 27). It is important for us to recognize and remember that, whatever our different circumstances might be, we all share in that journey of faith towards God who loves us.

In the Holy Father's Message for our observance of the World Day of Migrant and Refugees 2019, Pope Francis challenges us to reflect deeply on our deep spiritual relationship with all involved in this pilgrimage. He constantly says "it is not just about migrants" to urge us to see that it really is about all of us in our own journey of spiritual fulfillment to be God's people. In so many ways migration and seeking refuge are a common and engaging experiences that all of us share. It is in comparing our own attitudes and reactions to others experiencing that journey that we can be enlightened about our own progress in our response to God's call to intimacy with Him. If we accept that the Lord Jesus continues to enliven us with the values of His Good News then we can more realistically assess how genuinely we accept those values and apply them in our own journey by examining our own attitudes, reactions and actions to migrants and refugees. In other words we can judge our own

progress by assessing how we judge those who are migrants or seeking refuge in our midst.

The Holy Father specifically mentions some areas for this comparison. They include fear that deprives us of an opportunity to encounter the Lord in others. Another area is charity because through works of charity we demonstrate our faith, give expression to the type of society we are building, and show the value we give to each human life. Another area is about the compassion we have for each other, whether we appreciate each other as a gift, and embrace others. Another area of comparison between the Gospel values and our life is selfishness – Pope Francis uses the term “Me first, and then others!”. Yet another area he asks us to consider is whether we put the person rather than the social consequences at the centre of our thought and activity. He also reminds us that Jesus’ disciples are commissioned by Him to build the city of God in our midst here and now.

The whole question of migrants and refugees has come to the forefront of our social and political discussion in these recent years here in Australia. It is a relevant discussion and it is timely for us to step up and do everything we can through thought, prayer and action to show forth, with courage, that we are all responding to God’s call to be truly human and to embrace each other with the same dignity and value that God has for each one of us. Those who have come, and continue to come, to this country are a great gift and treasure from God. Our response must always be to be respectful and faithful to the reason for our being and with joyful and hopeful hearts welcome all our brothers and sisters as members of a community called consistently towards God. The World Day of Migrants and Refugees is an opportunity to refresh or begin anew living the Gospel values. True ‘It is not just about migrants’ – it is of course – but it is also about all of us in our own migration to the Father’s House. This is a message we all need to hear and put into practice because that is the mission that has been entrusted to us.

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