



ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHER PROWSE

Chairman

Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry

REFLECTION ON TOWARDS AN EVER WIDER "WE"

Pope Francis' Message for the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2021 is that we ought to work 'Towards an ever wider "WE"'.

He writes: 'We are all in the same boat and called to work together so that there will be no more walls that separate us, no longer others, but only a single "we", encompassing all of humanity.'

He goes on to say: "...we find many migrants and refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking, to whom the Lord wants his love to be manifested and his salvation preached."

Reflecting on this, I recall one of the initial shocks I received as a newly ordained priest. I started to visit parishioners extensively in their homes. The shock was to realise how many had not become real friends with their neighbours. It seemed that life for them was simply themselves and their

visiting families and friends. It did not really include in a significant way their neighbours. It was an "I" rather than a "we" mindset.

This fact became embarrassing when it became clear that one of the people on our parish social justice group was in this category. Yet the issues of this group included migrants and refugees policies in Australia.

We can take a national and international perspective on migrants and refugees. This is good. Yet, if our concerns do not start with our neighbours, so many of whom are migrants and refugees in Australia, then something is very wrong.

I have always appreciated the saying: "Think globally, act locally." Perhaps our contributions globally are limited. However, there is surely no limits to what we can do in our neighbourhoods. No doubt, the needs are great.

For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a huge reduction on migrants and refugees intake into Australia. I hope that former levels will return and be increased as soon as it is safe to do so. At the same time, so many people residing in Australia whose families live overseas are worried about their loved ones too often living in very dangerous COVID hot spots.

Let us be encouraged by Pope Francis' message and show neighbourhood closeness to them in their vulnerabilities. Simple practical kindnesses can generate the "we" of our concern for them. May they not feel simply the "I" of facing their difficulties alone.

As Pope Francis prays in his Message: "Bless each act of welcome and outreach that draws those in exile into the 'we' of community and of the Church, so that our earth may truly become what you yourself created it to be: the common home of all our brothers and sisters. Amen."