

INTRODUCING THE MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS

“God walks with His people.”



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In the Message of Pope Francis on the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2024, there is the reference to the synodal dimension of this day.

We are becoming increasingly familiar these days to the words “synodal” and “synodality”. These ancient but new words for us in Australia refer to our “walking together” with the Lord “as the People of God journeying through history on pilgrimage, “migrating”, we could say, toward the Kingdom of Heaven.”

The Pope contrasts the images of the biblical exodus and migrants. There are similarities. These include the fleeing “from oppression, abuse, insecurity, discrimination, and lack of opportunities for development.”

The Message insists that the Exodus and each type of Exodus shares the fundamental reality that “God precedes and accompanies his people.”

Over the years I have observed the truth of this insight. So many migrants and refugees have, for example, humbly come up to me and asked for the blessing of medals, religious pictures, rosaries, bibles and so on. For these people on the synodal journey of life, such articles are essential travelling companions. They are a reminder that Jesus travels with them in the hazardous journeys they are enduring.

Pope Francis reminds us “God not only walks with his people, but also within them.” The encounter with the migrant is an encounter with the migrant Jesus. It is Jesus, within the migrant, who asks us for shelter, opportunity, visits, basic essentials, and so much more. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25/35). We are to be ready with our practical charity on our common synodal journey.

In his final exhortation, Pope Francis in his Message on this special day exhorts us to “unite in prayer for all those who have had to leave their land in search of dignified living conditions. May we journey together with them, be “synodal together.”

W D M R



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