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A Brief Statement

Immigration Sunday

26th February

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Bishops' Commission for Social and Charitable Works*

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Today's 28th annual commemoration of Immigration Sunday affords occasion, [2884]
once more, for reflection on the grave world wide problems of human needs that are
inseparable from migratory movements whether free or forced, and of which there
is evidence in abundance, right before us, in the day by day spectacle of thousands
of Indo-Chinese fleeing a harsh and hostile regime.

Migration is a recurring phenomenon of our world, and the world total of uprooted [2885]
and displaced people does not diminish.

This characteristic of human mobility persist. Predictably, man somewhere and [2886]
always will be on the move.

He moves normally because he desires to do so. Quite often, however, as with the [2887]
unfortunate Indo-Chinese, because he must. As the former, he is an emigrant, as the
latter he is a refugee. In making his choice, the emigrant does so for a variety of
reasons, in an exercise of his human right of choice of residence.

For the refugee there is denial of this human right. He flees, or is driven from his [2888]
homeland because of fear of loss of personal freedom or even life itself.

There are in our world today millions of refugees. In Thailand alone some 100,000 [2889]
languish in temporary camps, and uncounted other thousands are adrift on the open
seas or seeking shelter in Malaysian, Indonesian and even Australian ports. These,
and many others like them, are facing a hopeless future, broken often in spirit, poor
in health, and compelled to live in conditions that are an affront to human dignity
and self respect. Devoid of capacity to order and shape their lives, they wait upon
the uncertain benevolence of Governments for asylum and resettlement.

It is for such that the Australian Bishops have pledged the full resources of the [2890]
Church and appealed to all for great willingness in welcoming and helping in every
way possible.

All emigration, free or forced, is attended in varying degrees by personal, family, [2891]
cultural, social and economic problems, and in the process, refugees and migrants
alike are reduced, invariably, to a condition of genuine need.

"He that shall see his brother in need and shall turn his heart from him. How doth

the love of God abide in him?" (Jn. 3.17)

Thanks to migration, our Australia today is a multicultural nation-in the making. [2892]
More than three million people of possibly, a hundred different national origins, have joined us in post war years in the building of our nation. For all these and others yet to come let there be a warm welcome and full support for an early and stress less insertion into communal and parochial life where in the words of Pope Paul "there shall be neither strangers nor passing guests but only Brothers".

Immigration Sunday then is to be a day of prayers for God's people everywhere; a [2893]
day for reflection with action to follow in bringing relief to the problems of those many fellow humans who, as migrants and refugees, seek for themselves and dependants, a new home in freedom with equal opportunity to build a secure and happy future.

Immigration Sunday, again, is for reaffirming man's duty towards his neighbour, [2894]
with the implication that countries rich in resources, as is Australia, shall open doors and hearts for the admission of less advantaged peoples, and especially, shall be prompt and generous in according asylum and rehabilitation to people in desperate refugee situations, as that of the Indo-Chinese.

Immigration Sunday, finally, provides, for all who call Australia home, opportunity [2895]
to share in the official activities of the Church's migration and welfare organisations by contributing to the special collections of Immigration Sunday.

All such undertakings, for the good of human kind, are to be viewed, in the final [2896]
analysis, as a participation in the extension of God's kingdom on earth and in practice, take on not a little of what is inferred in Our Lord's words:
"As often as you did it to one of these you did it to ME" (Matt. XXV.40)

For the Australian Episcopal Conference Commission for Social and Charitable Works.

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Source: Archives of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO), Canberra, Australia.
