

SUNDAY REFLECTIONS – 21st SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME Year B
26th AUGUST 2018



This Sunday, 26th August, known as Migrant and Refugee SUNDAY, the Catholic Church in Australia will be celebrating the contribution Migrants and Refugees have made in our communities.

Pope Francis has offered us many practical options to bring to our communities. Access these and other resources at <https://www.acmro.catholic.org.au>

Migration is a global phenomenon and many governments are enforcing laws that are aimed at restricting immigration. The ever-increasing number of countries affected by the migratory phenomenon calls for a multilateral approach from all countries.

Why is migration so much a priority for the pastoral care of the Catholic Church

In Australia, we are challenged by the re-establishment of the Manus Island and Nauru regional processing centres under both the Labour and Liberal governments. However, we have also seen the increase in the humanitarian intake, and the additional places in the refugee program. A drop in the ocean, perhaps, but one hopes a step in the right direction in providing assistance to the many millions of displaced persons around the globe.

The recent Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, reminds us that the path to personal holiness is obtained through concrete charitable acts of mercy. It is the call by Christ to care for our neighbour that spurs the pastoral mission of the Church to care for our migrant and refugee brothers and sisters. We are constantly reminded by the Holy Father and church leaders that it is not enough to sit idly by; we must be actors in bringing about social change with a Christian foundation.

What can we do as a nation and as individuals?
Pope Francis has a few suggestions:

WELCOME – **simplify the process for granting humanitarian visas and for reunifying families
 **offer migrants and refugees adequate and dignified initial accommodation
 ** guarantee personal safety and access to basic services

PROTECT – **guarantee them adequate consular assistance
 **Offer fair access to justice, freedom of movement, work opportunities and access to means of communication.

** they must be spared any form of detention related to migratory status and guaranteed regular access to primary and secondary education
PROMOTE - ** ensure the freedom of religious belief and practice
 ** promote inclusion, language instruction and active citizenship and information in their mother tongue

INTEGRATE - ** accelerate the process by granting citizenship free of financial or linguistic requirements;
 ** foster a culture of encounter in every way possible by increasing opportunities for intercultural exchange, and developing programs to prepare local communities for integration processes.

GOSPEL: JOHN 6:60-69

After hearing his doctrine many of his followers said, "This is intolerable language. How could anyone accept it?"

Jesus was aware that his followers were complaining about it and said, 'Does this disturb you? What if you should see the son of man ascend to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the outset who did not believe and who was to betray him. He went on, 'this is why I told you that no one could come to me except by the gift of the Father.'

After this, many of his disciples went away and accompanied him no more. Then Jesus said to the Twelve, 'What about you, do you want to go away too?'

Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life, and we believe; we have come to know that you are the Holy One of God.'

PRAYERFUL REFLECTION

In a time of Violence

This prayer remembers those who are affected by violence and conflict, and asks for the courage to commit ourselves to the difficult work of building peace.

In a time of violence,
We turn to you, Lord of Sorrows,
Who is burdened with the cries still echoing in
Hiroshima,
With the broken bodies of women and girls in the
Congo,
With the blood flowing in Syria.

In a time of violence
We gather to mourn and pray for our communities,
Past and present, Local and global.

In a time of violence
We commit ourselves to the difficult work of
peacemaking
So we may honour the suffering and pain
Of our sisters and brothers.

O Lord of Sorrows,
Give us the courage to speak the words
Of peace again and again
So they might flourish in an arid land.

REFLECTION: The readings today speak of the necessity to live up to obligations. Let us remember today the vulnerable, threatened, tortured people who come to us hungry for life, for freedom, for security, for peace. There are times when we think it is just too much trouble, or too dangerous, or perhaps just not worth the effort, to do what society calls us to do.

Jesus experienced the same thing in today's Gospel. He was beginning to attract followers. And as one might guess, some were more dedicated than others. Some said, 'This is a hard teaching,' and turned back and no longer followed him. What do we say? The disciple of Jesus has to respond to the question: 'Where shall we go to?'

We can often look for God in all the wrong places, and amongst the wrong people. The gospels point to the ones where God in the person of Jesus is to be found. Jesus embraced the human condition instead of running away from it. His humanity expressed his divinity. It did not contradict it. We experience God: in the deepest recesses of our humanity.

If we take seriously the call to remain faithful to Jesus, we cannot avoid 'eating his flesh and drinking his blood' – taking the life, the values, the mission, the purposes, the attitudes, and his priorities into our hearts. We never have an excuse to stop loving, and we cannot justify putting others down or condemning them.

May we look beyond individuals and persons when resisting injustice to the institutions, systems and ideologies that oppose God's Reign. We need this Jesus perspective if we are to work together for the good of all. In the gospel today, Jesus asserts that he is God's love 'in the flesh.' May we too be God's love in the flesh.



When we are dreaming alone it is only a dream.
When we are dreaming with others, it is the
beginning of reality. *Dom Helder Camara*