

CELEBRATING MIGRANT & REFUGEE SUNDAY 2007 Action Resource

Each year most Catholic dioceses in Australia celebrate Migrant & Refugee Sunday on the last Sunday in August. Some dioceses may, for local reasons, decide to commemorate this occasion on another date.

As faith communities we take the opportunity to incorporate this celebration into our liturgy.

This paper presents some resources and action ideas to help parishes, communities and schools to plan their celebrations.

LITURGY RESOURCES

Liturgy resources to assist the celebration of Migrant and Refugee Sunday on the weekend of 26 August have been posted to every parish by the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office. They can also be downloaded at <http://www.acmro.catholic.org.au/news/index.htm>

A poster for the occasion can also be downloaded from <http://www.acmro.catholic.org.au/news/RefugeeMigrantSundayposter2007pdfjpg.pdf.pdf>

Here are some general ideas for liturgy that you could consider using regardless of the date on which your parish, community or school marks this occasion:

- Incorporate some of the languages spoken in your parish, school or community into the liturgy, providing English translation in the bulletin or via PowerPoint or overhead projector;
- Include hymns in languages other than English;
- Decorate the Church with the works and crafts of the countries of origin or ancestry of parishioners;
- Invite some local parishioners or students

from different cultures and countries to be engaged in the liturgy by way of performing music, dance, or being ministers of the Word.

- Use the Roman Missal's options for the Mass for Refugees and Exiles for prayers such as the Collect.
- Use the ecumenical liturgy notes in the National Council of Churches education kit at http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/refugee_and_migrant_sunday

PAPAL MESSAGE & DISCUSSION GUIDE

This year's Papal Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees focuses on the theme *The Migrant Family*. The Message is only a couple of pages long and can be downloaded at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20061018_world-migrants-day_en.html

For a summary of key points and questions for reflection and discussion visit <http://www.faithdoingjustice.com.au/0707/World%20Day%20of%20Migrants%20&%20Refugees%202007%20Discussion%20Guide.pdf>

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

For links to key Church teachings and interventions by the Holy See concerning refugees and asylum seekers, visit the issues pages of www.faithdoingjustice.com.au and select [Refugees & Asylum Seekers](#).

ACTION IDEAS

Many of the activities suggested by the Refugee Council of Australia for Refugee Week could also be held to celebrate Migrant and Refugee Sunday. Their action kit can be accessed at <http://www.faithdoingjustice.com.au/0507/RWResourceKit.pdf>

DID YOU KNOW?

“... of the mainstream Churches in Australia, the Catholic Church has been the one most touched by migration. Since 1947, it has grown from 1.57 million to be Australia’s largest faith community (5,001,833 people who represent 26.7 per cent of the Australian population). From the 2001 census (details are not yet available from the 2006 census) we learn that 26.33 per cent of the Catholic population had been born overseas. Equally importantly, approximately 40-45 per cent of the Australian Catholic people were either migrants or the sons or daughters of migrants. Migrants and Refugees can thus no longer be considered as additions or appendages, nor should they ever have been. Rather, they are an integral part of the Church. They are an integral part of the history of the Church in Australia. They are part of the Church as God’s mystery of communion and community. They are part of the history of God’s salvific and liberating action.”

Bishop Joseph Grech
Delegate for Migrants and Refugees Bishops
Commission for Pastoral Life

ONE ORGANISATION’S RESPONSE: Jesuit Refugee Service’s Housing Project

Some asylum seekers living in the community are permitted to work and support themselves while they wait for their immigration status to be determined. There are however a number of asylum seekers who are placed on bridging visas with extremely restrictive conditions, who have no right to work, to access Medicare or claim Centrelink benefits. These people reside lawfully in the community yet are totally dependent on the welfare sector for their most basic needs. They are often at great risk of homelessness or forced to rely on inadequate and insecure accommodation for lengthy periods of time.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is in the process of developing a project to meet this urgent need for adequate housing for asylum seekers in the Sydney community. Having stable accommodation can make a world of difference to someone who has been forced to make a new life in a foreign place, with few resources and contacts to draw upon. One of the key aspects of the project is to ensure that residents are properly supported and linked to the community in which they are living. JRS hopes to provide safe and secure accommodation to these vulnerable people and enable them to live with dignity until a decision is ultimately made on their application for protection.

How you can help:

- Become a member and receive updates on JRS projects, reports, a newsletter *Link*, and the Annual Report.
- Individual donations are always welcome, especially at times when JRS launches an appeal during a refugee crisis.
- Offer practical support by becoming a volunteer at the Kings Cross office and assisting with compiling newsletters, advocacy or fundraising. Perhaps volunteer your time to get to know local asylum seekers living in the community and offer companionship and accompaniment.

For more information, contact:
Jesuit Refugee Service Australia
PO Box 522, New South Wales 1340
Tel 02 9356 3888 Fax 02 9356 3021
Email admin@jrs.org.au www.jrs.org.au

ONE SCHOOL’S RESPONSE: St Ignatius College Athelstone, SA

St Ignatius College in Athelstone, South Australia organised a range of activities for Refugee Week. Could your school use similar ideas to mark Migrant and Refugee Sunday?

Music: Performance by a Nigerian drummer.

Sport: The Friendship Cup – an annual soccer competition between St Ignatius College and the Adelaide Secondary School of English. A girls’ team participated for the first time this year.

Fair Trade: Fair Trade soccer balls were used in the Friendship Cup, raising awareness that many balls used in all codes of football may have been stitched by child laborers. A stall was organized displaying a variety of Fair Trade items such as bags made from plastic drink containers collected from rubbish heaps in the Philippines, and Make Poverty History campaign wrist bands.

Sharing Stories: St Ignatius students visited the Adelaide Secondary School of English to hear the stories of the students’ journeys to Australia.

Food: Stalls with food from different cultures were held at lunch time, inviting students out of their comfort zones.

Liturgy: The school’s voluntary weekly Mass included music, stories and images of young refugees, and a guest speaker from an organization which provides education for the people of South Sudan.

Source: Kathy George, “The Voices of Young Refugees: Refugee Week 2007”, *The Ignatian*, 21 June 2007, p 5.