



OLSH

Hearts for Others



REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

As of May 2022, there were 112 people seeking asylum who remain in Nauru, and as of December 2021 (when Australia's arrangement with PNG ended) there were 105 people in PNG as a consequence of Australia's Border Protection Policy (Refugee Council of Australia, 2022).

The Australian Catholic Bishops stated (2017): *When we Australians support policies of cruelty and rejection, we close our ears to Christ's call and turn him away from our doors. We know that we are better than this. As Christians, we know that it is within us to hear the call of Jesus.*

As Australians, we've shown ourselves willing to take the path of generosity and leadership. We can do so again.

The call of the Bishops echoes the call of Pope Francis for our brothers and sisters, *"to be shown the love and tenderness of God."* This call is also echoed in our own General Chapter recommendations of 2011: *As Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, "we are working with, advocating for and empowering the poor and all who suffer, particularly women and children through our ministries...among refugees and displaced persons."* (FDNSC Generalate, Rome JPIC Bulletin, Feb 2018)



Church teaching

- **Healing a global wound:**
All people have the right to live a dignified life in their homeland, but imbalances and conflicts in the modern world have created the festering wound of displacement.
- **The right to seek asylum:**
Persecution, threat, danger, or being forcibly displaced gives rise to a right to seek asylum rather than to migrate through ordinary channels.
- **Human dignity:**
The human dignity and human rights of asylum seekers must be respected, regardless of their citizenship, visa status or mode of arrival.
- **Devotion to humanity:**
The right of nations to regulate migration is coupled with the duty to protect and help innocent victims and those fleeing for their lives. Borders are for the protection of people, not for the exclusion of people seeking protection.
- **Justice and Mercy:**
Laws which subject asylum seekers to arbitrary and prolonged immigration detention or banish them from seeking protection fail to uphold justice and mercy, and are immoral.
- **The right to be part of a community:**
We must assist the integration of asylum seekers into a host community by helping them to find a place where they can live in peace and safety, work and take on the rights and duties that exist in the country that welcomes them.

(Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, 2018)

“for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,”

Matthew 25:35

Reflection, discussion and sharing:

- How do refugees challenge the conscience of the world, and my conscience?
- Do I have a heart for hospitality?
- What can my local parish or community do to live out the call of the General Chapter to assist refugees through a response of welcome, protection, promotion and integration?

Home:

Home has many aspects. Home is a secure base from which to explore the world. Home is that feeling of security. Home is the certainty that you have a place to return to. Home is a safe haven. We all need a home, a place to identify



with. Home is part of our identity. Who we are and where we come from cannot be separated. This is why being forced to leave your home is so traumatic. Part of yourself seems to be torn away. There is no certainty that you will be able to return. You may be permanently separated from part of who you are so you need to be able to rebuild that home, that part of yourself, somewhere else. (Caritas Australia)

- **Share some of your ideas, memories, hopes and gratitude for your own home.**
- **Share any stories you know, or have lived, of being separated from home and the consequences of this for all those involved.**

Imagine yourself as a refugee:

What would you do if there was no government or law enforcement to protect you and your family? If there were bombs dropping out of the sky into your neighbourhood? If you found family and friends were injured or dead? If there were armed militants roaming the streets? If food was not available? If there were threats to kidnap members of your family or community? How would you feel? What would you do?

- **In what ways can assisting refugees be seen as an act of justice due to them, rather than simply 'alms' from the goodness of our hearts?**

Discuss:

- **What misinformation exists generally in the Australian community about refugees?**

"I wish to invite you... to see Christ in every brother and sister in need, to proclaim and defend the dignity of every migrant, every displaced person and every refugee."

Pope John Paul II

