



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office



2 August 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As a matter of urgency, I write in what may truly be a defining time in our national identity.

As our government begins enforcing a new offshore detention policy we are compelled, I believe, to reflect seriously on how these policies reflect on us – Catholic Australian people – and if in fact we wish our representatives to act in this way on our behalf.

How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? 1 John 3:17

The new resettlement arrangements with Papua New Guinea are based on the premise that it is wrong for people fleeing from persecution to seek asylum in Australia. This is fundamentally untrue. The policy also asks the people of Papua New Guinea to not only show a level of generosity far beyond their economic means, but also to welcome these refugees in a way that we ourselves are not willing to do. This action is demeaning to everyone involved.

We have the duty as members of one human family to help those who arrive on our shores seeking asylum and strive with all our resources to assist them no matter how inconvenient this may prove to be.

Pope Francis recently said: "The 'other' is no longer a brother or sister to be loved, but simply someone who disturbs my life and my comfort. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn't concern me; it's none of my business."

I implore you to mark the 99th World Day of Migrants and Refugees on Sunday 25th August, 2013 and make clear that you are not indifferent to the plight of others. An outstanding resource, *MIGRATIONS: Pilgrimage of Faith and Hope*, has been especially designed to assist you and your community mark the week leading up to this date. You may have received already this resource but if not, I ask you to view it online at www.acmro.catholic.org.au.

There are a number of ways by which your community can get involved in the spirit of this World Day. Please, I urge you to take personal action and lead and inspire others in your community to do the same. You may choose to use the resource in the following ways:

- Pray for Faith and Hope, use the homily ideas and prayer petitions available in the resource
- Provide your community with clear and accurate information
- Promote Catholic Social teaching on Mandatory Immigration Detention
- Get involved in the End Child Detention campaign

Hope is a major force of motivation driving refugees to endure and continue their journey. In faith they look to us as people who can fulfil their legitimate hopes. In this Year of Faith, we note that people who are migrants/refugees place their faith and hope in us; pray that we will be inspired to fully live our Christian commitment and open our hearts and allow the love of God to abide in us.

Yours sincerely in Christ

Most Rev Gerard Hanna DD
Delegate for Migrants and Refugees
Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life