



FEBRUARY 2012

# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MIGRANT & REFUGEE OFFICE

## News

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### People on the move: an evangelizing opportunity

As the Catholic Church celebrates the World Day of Migrants and Refugees on January 15, 2012, the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI covers the theme of *"migrations and new evangelization"*. He invites people of good will, especially Christians, to commit themselves to find solutions to the countless challenges that human mobility and protection of people's human rights, their families, their culture, and their communities present.

Welcoming migrant or refugee sisters and brothers, who leave their homeland seeking better life conditions, or because of persecutions, threats of war, violence, hunger or natural disasters, is not only a matter of social action or solidarity, but *"a providential opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel in the contemporary world"*, as Benedict XVI tells us. The challenges of the globalization process, the Arab springtime, the worldwide economic crisis, the persecution of Christian minorities, and the deep

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changes in contemporary society, prompted John Paul II and then Benedict XVI, to present the New Evangelization as an urgent pastoral response to the challenges of migrations and the demands of faith as revealed by God in his Son Jesus.

The pastoral response is based upon the Gospel message that equates our meeting with neighbors as meeting with Christ himself. Every Christian is a bearer and heir of the historical heritage of God's people. It handed down to us the respect of migrants and the value of hospitality. We read in God's word: *"Don't mistreat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God."* (Lv 19:33-34).

In Christ, God came begging humankind for hospitality, experiencing expatriation in Egypt. (Mt 2:14) He identified Himself with the stranger in need of hospitality and shelter: *"I was a foreigner and you welcomed me"*. (Mt 25:35)

Finally, as Vatican II states, migrations are a sign of the times we must be able to read today!

From this Christian viewpoint that focuses on the person, on life itself, on the signs of the times and of history, the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles (Scalabrinians) renews its commitment with the Church at the service of the New Evangelization in the vast and complex phenomenon of human mobility. We do this by keeping faithful - as we have done for 125 years - to the service of communities of migrants in their journey of faith, of formation, of inculturation and participation in the local Church. But we must not forget the need to intensify our involvement with the political and social agencies that advocate laws, programs and services for the protection of human and cultural rights and the dignity of migrant, displaced, and refugee sisters and brothers.

Rome, January 12, 2012

Fr. Sérgio O. Geremia, c.s.

Superior general

Source: Missionari Scalabriniani,

<http://www.scalabrini.org/>

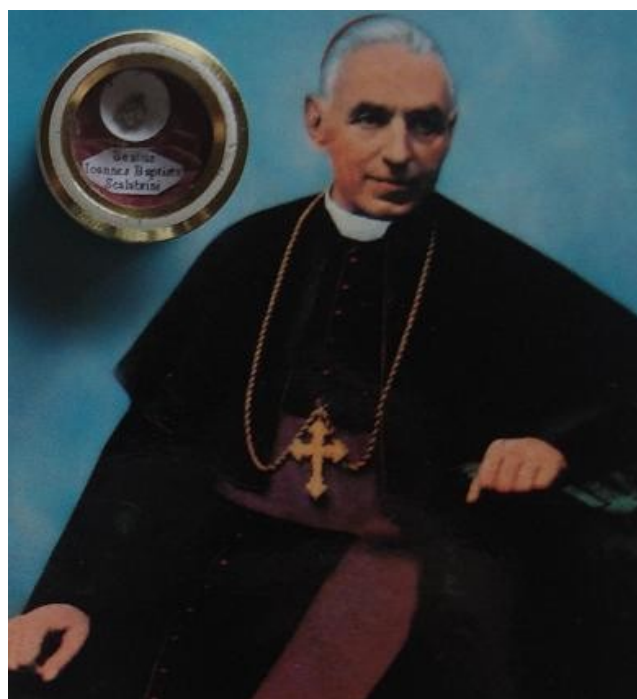


Photo: John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905)

Source: Custode Reliquia

**Asylum seeker community support more than reasonable says Catholic Church**

**Media Release  
February 17, 2012**

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) supports the Government's efforts to reduce the human cost of prolonged and indefinite detention.

Media reports which criticise the Government for providing asylum seekers released into community detention with up to \$10,000 of home furnishings, electrical goods and other financial support has been called misleading and provocative by the ACMRO.

ACMRO Director Fr Maurizio Pettenà said today that community detention is not only cheaper in financial terms but also reduces the impact on the mental health and recognises a sense of human dignity.

"These costs are an appropriate expense to facilitate community detention which is a much more dignified way to host asylum seekers while awaiting their refugee claims to be processed", he said.

"These asylum seekers do not own these goods, they are owned by the Australian community who places them at the service of a truly humane and compassionate program for those who are in great need of our help."

"We also expect to see some reduced downstream costs, including the cost of mental and physical health services, family intervention services and other support programs. There is also the potential that time in community detention could facilitate a faster entry to the workforce once a client gets a visa."

"It can be expected that asylum seekers will experience better mental health and better integration generally as they have an opportunity to learn about the Australian community and have autonomy over their own lives", said Fr. Pettenà

Bishop Eugene Hurley who has just been appointed to the Minister's advisory council on immigration also spoke out on the matter, saying that the newspaper's treatment of this issue is simplistic and incorrect.

"By providing asylum seekers, particularly families, with essentials, we demonstrate a more humane way to assist vulnerable people. This reflects more fully our interest in living up to our international convention obligations and the values of a more compassionate society", he said. A spokesperson for the Department of Immigration said that they expect that costs will actually decrease with this new move.

**For media enquiries or to organise an interview with Fr Pettenà or Bishop Hurley, please contact Beth Doherty on 0407 081 256**



## Media Release - February 24, 2012

### Divine Word Missionaries embark on new ministry with asylum seekers

Members of the Society of the Divine Word AUS Province met recently for their Assembly and Chapter meeting and resolved to renew and deepen their current ministerial commitments as well as strike out in new areas, particularly in support of asylum seekers and refugees.

Sixty-five members of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVDs) and their lay collaborators met at Marsfield in Sydney for the Provincial Assembly which focused on the theme of "See, I am doing a new thing" (Is 43:18-19).

In particular, the three day Assembly explored the current situation of Catholic Social Teaching and discussed how social justice could be more actively incorporated into the life and mission of the SVDs.

Fr Bruce Duncan cssr, a noted author, theological lecturer and social justice advocate, gave a keynote address on *Catholic Social Teaching in the World Today* and helped to facilitate discussion among the confreres and their collaborators on the themes raised.







Fr Tim Norton, SVD Provincial, said the triennial Assembly and Chapter meeting provided a chance for members of the Province from Australia, Thailand and New Zealand to come together and focus on both the work being done in Divine Word Missionary ministries and the challenges and opportunities that exist.

"It was a chance to gather with our lay collaborators to discuss the Biblical and Doctrinal foundations of

Catholic Social Action and recall the need to keep a focus on this area in our ministry," Fr Tim said. "So, as SVDs, we renewed our understanding of our present commitments and considered further opportunities in light of this call to actively pursue justice in the world and particularly for the people and communities we serve."

Among the SVD ministries that were featured in panel discussions during the Assembly were those with the Aboriginal communities in Alice Springs and Santa Teresa; in Thailand, working with people living with AIDS; as well as parish ministry throughout Australia, New Zealand and Thailand.

Fr Tim said an important outcome of the Assembly and Chapter was a commitment by the Divine Word Missionaries to embark on "a new thing" by welcoming asylum seekers into SVD accommodation in Melbourne and Sydney while they await the outcome of their claims.

"This is a new area of ministry for us," Fr Tim said. "We are delighted to be working with Jesuit Refugee Services, CatholicCare Melbourne and the Federal Government to enable these vulnerable young men to live in the community while their claims are processed. Our focus on the Gospel call to social justice during our Assembly helped us to place this new ministry into context for us and underline both the Biblical and Missionary nature of this initiative."

Fr Tim said the Assembly also resolved to increase support for SVD missions in Central Australia and Thailand, as well as promote the SVD Bible apostolate, and justice and peace initiatives in parishes.

Contact: Debra Vermeer at SVD Communications on 0414 880 475 or at [Vermeer.debra@gmail.com](mailto:Vermeer.debra@gmail.com)

*Photos: Courtesy of the Divine Word Missionaries*

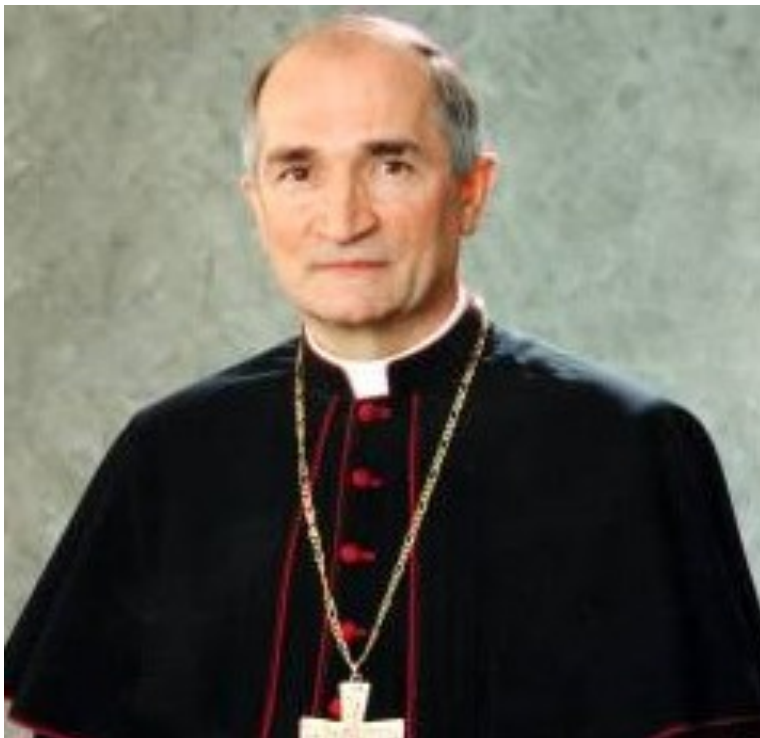


## PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Apostolic  
Nuncio,

Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations  
and

Other International Organizations in Geneva at the  
Intergovernmental event at ministerial level on the occasion of the  
60th anniversary of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and  
the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness  
Geneva, 7-8 December 2011



Mr. Chairman,

1. Refugees have always been part of history. Unfortunately today their number and their suffering still remain a wound in the social fabric of the international community. They continue to challenge our conscience, each one of the 33 million persons whom the UNHCR is currently mandated to protect and assist. "A world where human rights are violated with impunity will never stop producing refugees of all kinds."<sup>1</sup> Uprooted by wars, political upheavals, ethnic cleansing, religious persecution and other human rights violations, refugees are both the flashing red light of alarm pointing out deep social and

*Photo: Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Catholic News Agency website*

political failures and an urgent call to remedy their suffering. The Holy See is pleased to take part in these commemorations of the 60th anniversary of the major instrument of refugee protection and of the 50th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. It is a special moment to express appreciation for the generous work carried out and to motivate renewed commitment and search for innovative responses. The Holy See was among the original 26 States that took part in the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in July of 1951 which gave rise to one of the conventions we commemorate today. Despite the tense geopolitical situation of the time, the parties held the hope that they could produce a convention that would make the world a better, safer, more humane place. They succeeded in the efforts and for 60 years people fleeing persecution have found protection. The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was a good document for the time and was left open for greater inclusiveness. Intervening events and international agreements suggest possibilities that now can update and make more realistic the protection objectives of the Convention, in line with developments in this first part of the 21st century.



*Pilgrims from all over the world gather for WYD Madrid 2011*

2. At the close of last year's High Commissioner's Dialogue, he noted the lack of the right "to run for one's life." The refugee definition in Article 1 of the 1951 Convention provides for protection from persecution. Public culture and a greater awareness of human rights call for a new understanding of forced displacement to escape tragic situations that are equivalent to persecution, for example, natural disasters, or events that seriously disturb public order and mistaken economic policies which put a population in life threatening conditions. A culture of protection entails a dynamic evolution of standards which, in turn, will promote peaceful relations and the common good since they safeguard the dignity and the rights of every person at risk.





Moreover, the right to run for one's life entails the right to enter a foreign territory while at the same time consideration is given to both the good of the receiving society and the need of asylum-seekers. Burden sharing in this regard is not limited to the provision of financial support by wealthier States to States

hosting large numbers of refugees, but also implies their acceptance of persons fleeing conflict or disaster in similar proportion to poorer States. Recent examples have shown that the gap between poor and rich countries in welcoming refugees remains significantly wide.

Regional measures have advanced humanitarian law by adopting a more comprehensive understanding of protection for forcibly displaced persons. The universalization of such norms would be beneficial and would encourage a new mentality of welcome.



Source: <http://northwardho.blogspot.com.au/2008/06/polar-cities-and-climigrants-climate.html>

3. Article 4 of the 1951 Convention recognizes the universal right to freedom of religion in the same manner as accorded to nationals of the receiving State. Subsequent human rights treaties, however, have recognized that States may not impose restrictions on this right. In this Delegation's view, Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) should be used to interpret and apply article 4 and specifically recognize the right of a person to change his or her religion in accord with the dictates of his or her conscience.

In a similar fashion the rights to which refugees are entitled, for example the right to freedom of movement and the human right to work to support one's family must be given more respect and further extended in the coming years. Encampment, in our view, is permissible, for a short period of time, in an influx situation. But use of encampment as a permanent policy, and making access to legal work almost impossible for most refugees, are both practices which should be progressively abandoned.



4. Article 22 of the present convention ensures the right to primary education for refugees on an equal footing with nationals. Today this right should be extended to include secondary education and vocational training. In fact, no child anywhere can be prepared to contribute to society if his or her education ceases after primary school. In this regard we would note the special need to see that girls and young women receive education. In the first place, going to school is a form of protection. A well supervised, well run school is a deterrent to violence against women and girls. Moreover, providing education to girls and women affirms their equal dignity and prevents discrimination and confinement to secondary roles in society.

As we commemorate the 60 years of the refugee convention and the 50 years of the convention on the reduction of Statelessness, these are some concerns the Delegation of the Holy See wishes to raise as an encouragement to pursue protection for forcibly uprooted people in line with contemporary circumstances. The practical implementation of adequate forms of protection demands a political will that only deep convictions of solidarity and mutual responsibility for the common good can provide. The dialectical tension between the ideal response and existential pragmatism will persist. The way into the future, however, requires both a renewed effort to eliminate the root causes of forced displacement and a more comprehensive protection when displacements occur. The task eludes the good will of any single country and calls for coherence and cooperation. Pope Benedict XVI expresses the hope that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real force. He writes:

*“One senses the urgent need to find innovative ways of implementing the principle of the responsibility to protect and of giving poorer nations an effective voice in shared decision-making. This seems necessary in order to arrive at a political, juridical and economic order which can increase and give direction to international cooperation for the development of all peoples in solidarity. To manage the global economy....; and to regulate migration: for all this, there is urgent need of a true world political authority ... Without this, despite the great progress accomplished in various sectors, international law would risk being conditioned by the balance of power among the strongest nations. The integral development of peoples and international cooperation require the establishment of a greater degree of international ordering, marked by subsidiarity, for the management of globalization...”<sup>2</sup>.*

In the area of forcibly displaced people, this ethical approach can open a way to a future when all human rights are fully accorded to refugees and the right of any human being to run for his or her life is acknowledged and respected.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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1 Cfr. Pontifical Council ‘Cor Unum’ – Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. *Refugee: A Challenge to Solidarity*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1992.

2 Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 67.

## **Democratic Republic of Congo, 8 February**

Due to recent conflict in the border district of Walikale, almost 20,000 people have been forced to flee to the nearby district of Masisi, where the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) currently manages two large education and emergency assistance projects.

To provide for the thousands of displaced children, the JRS has begun building four temporary schools in the four villages of Mahanga, Lushali, Kaandja and Busoro. According to JRS field staff, teams are following the displaced people in order to ensure that teachers can commence education activities wherever they find refuge.

The JRS have counted nearly 2,000 families with around 6,000 children in need of primary education in these four villages. After consulting local education authorities, school headmasters, teachers and parents, the JRS have been given the approval to establish mobile schools.

## **Somalia, 17 February**

The UNHCR report that over 7,200 Somalis have fled the Afgooye corridor just north-west of the capital Mogadishu due to rising conflict. According to Bruno Geddo, UNHCR's Representative for Somalia, some are settling into existing settlements for displaced people in Mogadishu, while others are heading towards districts that were recently vacated, or are living with family or friends.

The UNHCR, along with other agencies, will be providing much needed assistance to this new population, who are in urgent need of shelter, food and water.

Somalia generates the largest number of refugees and displaced people in the world after Afghanistan and Iraq. About 1.3 million Somalis are internally displaced while over 968,000 others live as refugees in countries neighbouring Somalia, including Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia.

## **Mali, 17 February**

The UNHCR report that over 44,000 people fled the month-long violence in northern Mali, with arrival numbers increasing rapidly from the 22,000 recorded on 7 February.

The flow of refugees has primarily been to Mauritania (over 18,000), Niger (18,000) and Burkina Faso (over 8,000). Recent reports of conflict in areas bordering Algeria are expected to prompt more people to flee Mali to neighbouring countries.

Emergency teams of the UNHCR are providing assistance to the refugees who have taken refuge in makeshift shelters. According to UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Fleming, "humanitarian assistance is all the more critical because the Sahel region is facing a severe food crisis due to several years of drought".

One lady from a village in eastern Mali reported that all the authorities had left one morning, causing panic. Armed men entered their village and took their possessions and cattle. Due to the insecurity and lack of food in Mali, her and her family had no choice but to leave the village.

In mid-January, conflict resumed between the Tuareg liberation movement MNLA and government forces in Mali, which broke a 2009 agreement that saw an end to the Tuareg rebellion.

