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AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MIGRANT & REFUGEE OFFICE

News

Special Interest

- St Patrick's Day Message
- JRS visit Christmas Island
- Summary of EMCC
- ICMC reaching out to refugees
- Fewer asylum claims to Australia in 2011

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***"We can
turn
our
world
around."***

In celebration of St. Patrick's day, Bishop Brady encouraged all to respond with love, compassion, justice, a fair go, and acceptance in the same way that St Patrick did. Noting that Irish Catholics who themselves have experienced oppression, should be the first to

"speak up for all people who have been oppressed."

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE



'Speak out' on refugees – bishop's call to Irish

By Sharyn McCowen

Printed in the Catholic Weekly Sydney on the 25 March, 2012

Bishop Terry Brady, auxiliary bishop of Sydney, called on Irish Australians to lead the welcome for asylum seekers in Australia.

In his St Patrick's Day Mass homily at St Mary's Cathedral on March 17, Bishop Brady reflected on the proud history of the Irish in overcoming their own oppression.

"I have to say, as an Irish-Australian, I think so much of social reform has taken place in this country be-cause the Irish voice spoke up," he said.

"They spoke up for the little people, they spoke up for the underdog.

"I hang my head in shame a little bit because I often think we Irish have fallen into the trap of becoming elitist ... often the oppressed become the oppressor."

The bishop said he fears this change "above everything else".

"Of any people on the face of the earth, we should be the most compassionate people of all, and the most understanding people of all, and the most welcoming people of all.

"That is part of our heritage. "And as a nation I get so upset when I see what we're doing to the asylum seekers. "We, above all people, must speak up for all people who have been oppressed."

Bishop Brady encouraged the congregation to be a disciple of Jesus as St Patrick was.

"Patrick was a true disciple of Jesus," he said. "That's why people were drawn to what Patrick had to say.

"He represented something very big. It was almost a replica of what happened in the Holy Land ... the people were following Jesus. They followed Jesus be-cause it was a message of love, compassion and justice.

"Patrick brought that same message of Jesus to the people of Ireland: love, compassion, justice, a fair go, acceptance.

"That's the same message that we have to share as the descendants of Patrick in our world at this time.

"We can turn our world around."

A large congregation attended the annual Mass at the cathedral.

Special guest was the Irish Consul General, Catriona Ingoldsby.

Concelebrants were Fr John McSweeney, Irish chaplain Fr Tom Devereux, Fr Brendan Quirk, Fr John Knight and visiting Irish priest Fr Tim Lehane.



What I saw at Christmas Island Detention Centre

Fr Celso Romanin SJ **JRS International**

Sydney, 29 February 2012 – When Fr Celso Romanin SJ arrived on Christmas Island in October this year, he encountered detainees living without hope, scenes that reminded him of his work years earlier with refugees in Asia and Africa. Here, he reflects on his experience.

In the mid-1980s a group of young men from Hei Ling Chow were involved in a violent riot and were removed to Victoria Prison on the island of Hong Kong in what can only be described as the bowels of the prison. The authorities said that although it was within the prison, this was not in fact prison but part of the detention system.

No one ever went there - no lawyer, no case-worker.

I, as chaplain, went each week, and felt the utter powerlessness of the young men. I listened as best I could to their stories, and felt the hopelessness of their situation. Whilst others lived in some kind of hope that their case would be activated and they would be found eligible for re-settlement in a third country, these young men were deprived of all hope. I often wonder what happened to them, where they are and how they cope with life.

It was a similar story throughout the camps of Asia, Pulau Galang, Pulau Bidong and Site 2 on the Thai/Cambodian border, and to a much lesser extent the Hmong camps of northern Thailand; a story of young people who had been snatched from their traditional family and cultural environment and had taken to a life of gang adherence. Fortunately, many who came to Australia were able to re-discover some of this cultural tradition, especially through family re-integration programs, and they have made wonderful citizens.

And in Africa a similar story: the men largely were dead or displaced, women and children found themselves in camps, and the mothers, because of the hard life and constant work to provide for the family, were not able to discipline their children, who in turn became more and more difficult to control.

Living in a cage

They were left in a cultural and spiritual void by wars and lack of self-determination.

So too here at the detention centre on Christmas Island. I sit in the compound, surrounded by young men housed in a cage, in a situation where they wait for someone else to make some kind of decision for them. They need someone else to interpret for them, and then their case is taken away, and they wait. I sit in the compound, surrounded by languages I don't understand. I try to picture myself in their situation, living with others who represent different cultures and languages, carrying different stories of violence and war, desperately seeking somewhere to be able to live

peacefully, and most importantly missing family. And this goes on day after day. I stay for a good while, and when I can no longer cope, I have a key and can go out.

But the question persists: what are we doing to young lives?



The government's answer is to tell us how evil the people smugglers are, and we must do what we can to stop them. And so those punished are the desperate, and the fishermen who receive a small payment for sailing the boats. These people are bewildered and totally lost. Most have no language, no affinity with others in detention, and ultimately are not the ones responsible for people smuggling – they are simply trying to provide for their families. **And so, who claims responsibility for young lives lost?**

I sit in the compound, surrounded by young men housed in a cage, in a situation where they wait for someone else to make some kind of decision for them.

For a short time of my life I can feel something of the emptiness, even the despair of others with very little to hope or live for. I can theorise about the importance of border control, of how just we are as a society to protect our citizens. But to do this we must distance ourselves from the human face of suffering. Here, people wait in despair; when things become too much to cope with, they are given sleeping pills, and when their despair becomes too great they light a fire in their room, or break a window, then there is a court case, no end to suffering, just more of it.

Fr Celso Romanin SJ



SUMMARY – *ERGA MIGRANTES CARITAS CHRISTI* ("The Love of Christ for Migrants")

Origin and aims:

This Instruction was disseminated in 2004 by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People in response to the challenges to the Church of the migration phenomenon in the 21st century.

As Cardinal Hamao, the then President of the Council, points out in the Instruction's preface, "today's migration makes up the vastest movement of people in all times" and has become an increasingly socio-economic, politic and cultural problem for governments and societies, as well as the Church. The aim of *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* is to update the Church's pastoral approach to migrants so that the migration experience of migrants and refugees, often a traumatic one, will be transformed, and allow those of them who are Christian to grow in their Christian lives. The Instruction also takes into account the composition of today's migration and its increasing diversity and emphasizes that an ecumenical vision of the migration phenomenon is needed by all the Church's faithful. In particular, it points to the need for inter-religious dialogue in relation to the increasing number of migrants who belong to other religions, especially that of Islam, immigrating to traditionally Christian countries, like Australia.

Structure:

Introduction – "The migration phenomenon today"

Part I – "Migration, sign of the times and concern for the Church"

Part II – "Migrants and the pastoral care of welcome"

Part III – "Workers in a pastoral care of communion"

Part IV – "The structures of missionary pastoral care"

Conclusion – "Universal mission"



The introduction - "The migration phenomenon today" (1-11):

The introduction examines the nature of the migration phenomenon in the 21st century, its causes and the serious issues that migration entails for individual migrants, especially women and children, as well as for migrant families. It stresses that this phenomenon gives rise to vital and urgent ethical challenges, particularly for the Church, but also for governments and society. These include challenges like the establishment of a new economic order in which the distribution of the goods of the earth are distributed more fairly.

Part I – "Migration, sign of the times and concern for the Church" (12-33):

This first section examines historically how the Church has always demonstrated a strong concern and compassion for migrants, seeing in them the image of Christ as a stranger who needs to be welcomed and cared for (cf. Matt 25:35 – "I was a stranger and you made me welcome"). Thus, for the Church, migration has always presented a major challenge in its work of salvation and its proclamation of the gospel of peace. As Part I indicates, this is well illustrated in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. In the latter Jesus and His mother, Mary, become living symbols of the foreigner and the emigrant, while the Church of Pentecost is presented as a real and symbolic meeting of all peoples in equality and harmony.

In its historical survey of the Church's pastoral outreach to migrants, Part I particularly emphasizes the effects of the Second World War on the migration phenomenon, with so many people being displaced and in urgent need of pastoral care in the countries to which they sought refuge at the end of the war. One of the outcomes for host countries was the increase in number of not just Latin (Roman Catholic Christians) but also those of the Eastern rite. Seminal in providing guidance for the challenges presented by these immigrants were the document, *Exsul Familia* and the Second Vatican Council. In particular, the latter called for lay people, as well as the clergy and the religious, to extend a welcome and pastoral care to the new migrants.

Part I concludes with the theological bases for the Church's outreach to migrants and refugees, for example, the dignity of the human person and the human rights of migrants. It speaks of how the Magisterium has consistently denounced social and economic imbalances and political policies that are the causes of migration. Finally, it describes the entities of the Holy See which have been established to facilitate and supervise the obligations of the Church to migrants, especially the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples (1988) and the International Catholic Migration Commission, formed originally in 1951.

Part II – “Migrants and the pastoral care of welcome” (34-69):

Part II opens with a consideration of the cultural and religious pluralism in the majority of the world's societies today. This pluralism makes it imperative, therefore, that the Church should engage even more strongly in inculturation, i.e. getting to know the people to whom and the cultures in which the Church is proclaiming the Gospel and interpreting that Gospel in terms of the cultures and ways of life of migrants. Particularly important in this task is respect for the cultural identity of the migrant, so that channels for a constructive dialogue can be established.

It outlines the three fundamental ways identified by the Second Vatican Council in which the Church should carry out its pastoral ministry to migrants:

- being communion
- being missionary

being the people and family of God, being mystery, sacrament, Mystical Body and Temple of the Spirit.

Above all, the body of the Church in the host country must show an authentic welcome and exhibit solidarity with the newcomers. An authentic welcome is seen to include not just provision of immediate assistance but long-term care and engagement with newcomers. Such a welcome also needs to oppose baseless suspicion and prejudice against foreigners. In its liturgical outreach to migrants, the Church must be sensitive to language and different cultural expressions of their faith by Catholic and Eastern Rite Christians as well as their particular conditions of life. Predominantly, it must base its pastoral outreach to immigrants on the love of Christ for all people.

Part II also stresses that the Church needs to explore avenues of ecumenical respect, understanding and dialogue with other Christian and non-Christian immigrants. This is particularly important with regard to other Christian and non-Christian enrolment in Catholic schools, marriage between Catholics and non-Christian migrants and baptism of children of “mixed” faith marriages. Especially with the growing percentage of Muslim immigrants, the document calls for the practice of discernment, i.e. “distinguishing between what can be and cannot be shared in the religious doctrines and practices and in the moral laws of Islam.” Finally, in relation to dialogue between Catholics and those of other religions, Part II stresses that the faithful must not just look for points in common so that peace can be achieved but look on dialogue as an opportunity to rediscover convictions which are shared by each community.

Part III - “Workers in a pastoral care of communion” (70-88):

This section explores the range of those involved in pastoral care of migrants and refugees. It commences with an endorsement that the churches of the host countries must try to work, wherever possible, with those of the countries from whence come the immigrants. It then goes on to provide detailed pastoral and juridical definitions of the Church agents of pastoral care to newcomers. These extend from particular chaplains of ethnic communities, missionaries and national coordinators of pastoral outreach to diocesan priests, members of religious orders and lay associations and people. This last emphasis on the roles of the laity in the pastoral care of communion to migrants and refugees, while not new in documents dealing with immigration, is particularly important, especially as it stresses the need for systematic formation of lay people and bodies so that they bear witness to a Christianity which welcomes and supports and integrates the newcomers into their new material and spiritual environments. In this way, as the document points out, the laity is building the Kingdom of God on earth, through their witness to their faith, charity, peace and justice.



Part IV – “The structures of missionary pastoral care” (89-94):

Part IV partners Part III in that it examines the structures of pastoral care to migrants. It emphasizes the importance of creating a unity within the diversity and plurality of the local Church that is harmonious. It also stresses the importance of those engaged in pastoral care to migrants to not just work **for** them but also to work **with** them. Especially vital is the need to allow immigrants to make their own contributions to the local Church. Account must be taken of the particular characteristics and needs of permanent and temporary migrants, e.g. with the latter, foreign students and first, second and third generations of migrants.

Above all, in the structures that are developed for migrant pastoral care, such pastoral care must be integrated, i.e. it needs to be a communion “that knows how to appreciate belonging to different cultures and peoples.” Structures which are identified by the document include:

- the intercultural and interethnic or inter-ritual parish* which provides pastoral assistance for both the local population and foreigners resident in the same territory;
- the territorial or local parish* made up of the local population but whose church and parish centre would be a point of reference, meeting and community for foreign communities in the area;
- centres for pastoral work among young persons and for vocational orientation;*
- centres for the formation of the laity and pastoral workers* in a multicultural perspective;
- centres for study and pastoral reflection*, especially with regard to the migration phenomenon and migrant pastoral care.

Conclusion – “Universal mission” (95-104):

The conclusion brings *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* to a close by stressing the universal nature of the Church’s mission to migrants. This universality should, it argues, be manifested in four ways by **all** the Church’s faithful:

- i. ensuring that migration becomes increasingly a “significant” factor for the Church, that Christians welcome and are open to migrants, and that the faithful may find the “seeds” of the Word in different cultures and religions.
- ii. building a communion between local and immigrant faithful; a communion which accepts and rejoices in legitimate diversity and difference and sets its face against discrimination and prejudice.
- iii. becoming missionary **within** their own countries so that all are incorporated into a Church of Gospel love and welcome. Being missionary also involves dialogue with other religious traditions and promotion of a culture of peace.

remembering that we are **all** pilgrims on a journey towards our heavenly kingdom and that we need to enable the Church to be a sign of hope in the world that “ardently desires justice, freedom, truth and solidarity.”

Juridical Pastoral Regulations:

Erga migrantes caritas Christi concludes with updated and accurate “juridico-pastoral regulations”, which recall the duties, tasks and roles of pastoral agents and of various Church entities in charge of the pastoral care of migration.

[This summary has been compiled by **Dr Judith Woodward**. It is recommended for a more comprehensive understanding that those interested should refer to the Instruction itself at:

www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_mig_]

International Catholic Migration Commission Reaching Out to Jesus in Strangers

By Edward Pentin

ROME, MARCH 8, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)) - John Klink, president of the International Catholic Migration Commission, describes the organization he heads as "one of the best kept secrets of the Catholic Church."

In today's increasingly globalized world of more than 200 million migrants, this worldwide Catholic humanitarian organization provides many of them with assistance, from integrating refugees into society and resettling migrants, to offering them legal protection and lobbying governments on their behalf.

The organization has also latterly reached out to care for some of the world's 27 million trafficked persons -- a staggeringly large number of people who, despite their innocuous label, could more accurately be described as modern-day slaves.

"The whole issue of migration -- the whole theology behind it -- is based on the fact that not only did Christ take on the mantle of humanity by being born of the Virgin Mary, but that within several weeks of his birth he became a refugee," Klink explains, recalling how Pius XII referred to Jesus as the archetype of all refugees.

"Having taken upon himself not only humanity but also the poverty and status of a refugee, how can the Church not mention this and not reach out to them?"

The Commission was established by Pius XII in 1951 at a time when Rome was filled with refugees from World War II. The Pope led by example, throwing open the doors of the Vatican and religious congregations to shelter them and, in 1952, issuing an Apostolic Constitution, "Exsul Familia Nazarethana," that contained guidelines for their pastoral care.

Today, the Commission works directly with migrants and refugees in more than 40 countries. It has an office in Geneva so that it can defend the dignity of migrants at the UN. And it works closely with bishops' conferences, other Catholic entities, non-governmental organizations and governments to advocate and defend the dignity of migrants and refugees in the most effective way possible. The Holy See, in a sign of its continued support and concern for the cause, granted the Commission canonical status in 2008.

"Most of our work over the last 61 years has been associated with resettlement," Klink explains, adding that most of this work is achieved in close collaboration with regional Catholic organizations. "We've resettled over a million refugees in the US alone -- quite a significant achievement."

The Commission's president, once a candidate to be an Assistant Secretary of State in the Bush administration, also rejects any notion that helping migrants is a "Leftist" issue. "This is part of the evangelization of the Church," Klink says. "That isn't to say everyone should just be able to be received into a country -- there have to be

clear regulations, but they have to be fair regulations. People have to have the opportunity to become productive citizens, and if they do follow the law, then that law should be able to provide a pathway for them to integrate."

Looking to the future, Klink is keen that bishops, laity and NGOs bring to the Commission's attention cases where it can offer advice and assistance. One strength of the Commission is to be able to contact governments involved and mediate on behalf of migrants. Such an incident happened recently when a bishop contacted the Commission, which then was able to have fruitful discussions with the Ethiopian government over the plight of a group of boat people. "The bishop might not have been able to do that just within his own country," Klink says. A former country director of Catholic Relief Services, Klink has an obvious passion for this work, which he sees as deeply Christian.

"In the Gospel of Matthew, in his final mandate, the Lord states very clearly unless you welcome the stranger you will not be allowed into heaven," the Commission president says. "He also made it very clear, as with the poor, that when you feed and clothe them, you are touching Christ himself."

"It is He who is there and so it is a dual 'reaching out,'" Klink explains, "because not only are you helping them and being Christ for them, but you are finding Christ by so doing."



Children gather at the ICMC medical camp
ICMC/A. Shaukat/2010

Fewer asylum claims in Australia

UNHCR Media Release 27 March 2012

In its latest annual *Asylum Levels & Trends in Industrialized Countries* Report, released 27 March 2011, UNHCR noted that 441,300 people claimed asylum in the 44 industrialized countries covered by the study during 2011. This represented a 20 per cent increase from 2010, when 368,000 claims were submitted.

The largest relative increases were seen in southern European countries - which recorded an 87 per cent increase - largely driven by the numbers of people fleeing North Africa by boat. A large increase was also observed in North America, where new asylum applications rose by almost 25 per cent.

By contrast, the Report shows the number of asylum-seekers coming to Australia in 2011 declined by nine per cent - from 12,640 in 2010 to 11,510 in 2011 - largely due to a reduction in the number of people coming to Australia by boat.

The largest number of asylum claims in 2011 were received in the United States of America (74,020), France (51,910), Germany (45,740), Italy (34,120), and Sweden (29,650).

Globally, Afghans were recorded as the largest nationality of asylum-seekers in industrialized countries, followed by China, Iraq, Serbia and Pakistan. The number of Afghans seeking asylum in the industrialized world was up by 34 per cent - an increase which has mostly been observed in Europe.

Going against this trend, Australia recorded a 45 per cent decrease in the number of Afghans claiming asylum in Australia.

"This Report shows clearly that the numbers of asylum-seekers coming to Australia are modest - and certainly manageable - when compared to many other industrialized countries," UNHCR Regional Representative Richard Towle said today.

"The recent introduction of a single system to assess refugee claims of both boat and air arrivals is a welcome step towards improving the efficiency, fairness and overall quality of the asylum system in Australia," Towle said.

"At the same time, UNHCR encourages Australia to maintain its commitment to working constructively and collaboratively with other states in the region under the Regional Cooperation Framework. We are convinced that if people can be made safer and more secure in South East Asia then they will not need to place their lives in the hands of people smugglers and have resort to dangerous boat journeys to Australia," he said.



Three people died on this boat, which ran aground on Lampedusa after the dangerous journey from Libya. UNHCR / F.NOY / May 2011

