



Australia Catholic
Migrant and
Refugee Office
ACMRO

Refugee and Migrant Sunday

25 August 2002

Information Kit

The Refugee Ribbon was born at the Show Mercy Concert held at the Sydney Town Hall, April 2002. The black stripes/bars represent the bars of a prison cell or compound. By wearing the ribbon you support the message of being with the refugees behind Australian Bars. (Source Project Safecom www.safecom.org)



The ribbons can be purchased for personal use or for fund raising activities from Australian Printed Ribbon(03) 9587 1511, a 100 metre roll is \$61.95 (plus gst). Each ribbon is cut to 20 cm (with a mitred edge) so you can get 5 ribbons per metre. The small brass safety pins are extra

There is no greater sorrow on earth than the loss of one's native land. Euripides 431BC

REFUGEE AND MIGRANT SUNDAY - 2002

“Road to Refuge: *from rejection to welcome*”

Refugee and Migrant Sunday will be celebrated and observed in most dioceses throughout Australia on Sunday August 25th 2002. Many schools will hold an observance in the week preceding or following the 25th.

This year in conjunction with the National Council of Churches and TEAR Australia a collaborative approach has been taken in order to raise awareness of issues as they relate to refugees and asylum seekers. TEAR Australia's kit challenges us to “Take to the refugee trail on Refugee Sunday”. The kit provides ideas on how to make refugee issues real by learning and understanding a bit better the situation. With practical application and lessons on the refugee experience.

The ACMRO kit contains:

- ❖ A poster for display in your church/school, resulting from a competition in Secondary schools. This year's winning poster was by Britt Ingerson Year 9, Mercedes College, WA.
- ❖ Questions and issues for discussion in response to the recently released Bishops' Statements on Refugees and Asylum Seekers - which is available at the ACMRO web page www.acmro.catholic.org.au
- ❖ An information sheet which is adapted from TEAR's kit and also contains information sources, questions and issues for discussion.

(If you do not receive the entire kit, please contact this office (ACMRO) on 02 62019848)

Theme for 2002

The theme set by the Holy Father for 2001 is *Migration and Inter-Religious Dialogue* where he discusses the significance of the importance of “Dialogue is the leading way to follow, and the Church invites us to walk this path in order to move from diffidence to respect, from rejection to welcome”. The message acknowledges the impact of globalisation which has meant that many cultures, religions and races are having to develop ways of living together to develop peacefully and in order to do so, barriers of diffidence, prejudice and fear must be removed. This sentiment provided this year's theme - with the Pope seeking improved dialogue “ ... in order to move from diffidence to respect, from rejection to welcome”.

Who are ‘Refugees’?

- Refugees are people who have been forced to flee their country because they are afraid of being persecuted on the basis of their race, their political beliefs, their religion, their nationality or because they belong to a particular group.
- They flee not because they choose to, but because they have to.
- They may have been threatened or tortured; seen their loved ones killed, or had to flee in fear of their lives, leaving behind their home, family and friends.
- Refugees are not migrants. Migrants make a conscious choice to leave home and move to another country. Migrants can make plans for their departure and bring their belongings with them. Refugees are usually forced to flee against their will.

The Difference between Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Refugees are people who HAVE been assessed as meeting the definition of a refugee according to the 1951 Convention relating to the status of refugees and the 1967 Protocol.

Asylum Seekers are people who have NOT been assessed, BUT who seek the protection of a country under the terms of the above Convention and Protocol.

QUESTIONS/ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION – refer to the Bishops Statement on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

1. *The Bishops remind us that the Gospel presents the Holy Family as refugees and asylum seekers. Read and reflect on the Biblical account of the flight into Egypt (Matt 2: 13-15). What are the similarities between the Holy Family and the forcibly displaced families seeking asylum in Australia.*
2. *The Bishops suggest that Government policy should not always be driven by popular opinion. Popular opinion is not always well informed, and may be driven by fear or self-interest. Where do you get your information about asylum seekers and refugees? What can you do to verify this information? On what principles are your views based?*
3. *The Bishops' Statement provides information about Australia's policies in relation to asylum seekers. How has the Statement increased your understanding of these matters?*
4. *The Bishops conclude that prolonged immigration detention is deeply destructive of human dignity. What alternatives would you suggest?*
5. *The Bishops categorically reject the "Pacific Solution". Discuss the particular elements involved.*
6. *The Bishops affirm that many Church people and Church organizations are working in different ways to support refugees and asylum seekers. What action is being taken in your local area? How can your parish, school, community or family contribute? What could you do?*
7. *The Bishops call for greater generosity in Australia's Refugee Program and more humane treatment of asylum seekers. What would be the benefits of such action?*

(To obtain a copy of the statement please contact this office on 02 6201 9848)

Possible Activities!!

Information Sheet

The Refugee Trail: An Activity for Australian churches on Refugee and Migrant Sunday developed by TEAR Australia with the aim to:

- give churches an opportunity to experience a little of what it means to be a refugee, by simulating some aspects of the refugee experience
- create a powerful public witness to Christian care and sympathy for refugees

Active Letter Writing Campaign

A draft letter to send to members of parliament is also available from ACMRO on request. The idea is to get many signatures on one letter which is an opportunity to speak with one voice to Government, calling for a just and compassionate response to refugees;

OR

Write a more personal letter individually to members of parliament by adapting from the suggested draft letter – a hand-written letter that an individual has put time and thought into has a greater impact than any number of petitions or form letters.

Information Sources

Refugee and Asylum Seeker statistics and data:

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees: www.unhcr.ch (see Basic Facts)

Refugee Council of Australia: www.refugeecouncil.org.au

Information and statistics on Australia's Immigration Program

Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs:
www.immi.gov.au

Education kit/guide – both teachers and students

Force-Ten: www.forceten.org.au

Debunking myths about asylum seekers

Edmund Rice Centre for Justice and Community Education: www.erc.org.au

Church Organisations

National Council of Churches in Australia - Christian World Service:
www.ncca.org.au

Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office:
www.acmro.catholic.org.au

Mercy Refugee Service: www.mercy.org.au

Jesuit Refugee Service: www.jrs.au.org

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council: www.socialjustice.catholic.or.au

TEAR Australia: www.tear.org.au

Human Rights

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission: www.hreoc.gov.au

Australians Against Racism: www.australiansagainstracism.org

Amnesty International: www.amnesty.org.au/refugees/index.html

Innovative Approaches

Children Out of Detention: www.chilout.org

Safecom Project- Refugees: www.safecom.org.au

Dancing Spiders: www.dancingspiders.org

Australian For Just Refugee Programs: www.justrefugeeprograms.com.au

Rural Australians for Refugees: www.ruralaustraliansforrefugees.org

National Directory – Refugee Australia for the "most concise listing of Australian refugee groups": www.refugeeaustralia.org

The Road to Refuge – Special report available on the BBC home page highlighting the plight of refugees and their struggle for freedom:

news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_de.../default.stm