

1973

A Brief Statement

**Immigration Sunday**

**25th February**

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Bishops' Commission for Social and Charitable Works*

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For the twenty-fourth year in succession, a Statement from the Bishop's Commission is issued on the occasion of Immigration Day. This year the commemoration coincides with the holding in Australia, in Melbourne, Victoria, of the 40th International Eucharistic Congress. The theme of the Congress has been the appealing injunction of Christ:— "*Love one another as I have loved you*". (John XV 12.) [2838]

Christ, as God, in His love for a man arranges man's movements for mankind's progress, all with a view to "*the new heavens and new earth where justice and prosperity will be complete*". (2 Peter III 13.) Christ, in the Eucharist, in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is the central point of all religious practice, whether individual or collective. Grouped about the altars of our churches at many Holy Masses offered during the Congress, as in all parishes at all times and places, our people, new and old Australians, visitors from abroad, all form that Community which is the Church, Catholic, Universal. Indeed, without the Eucharist there is no Church. [2839]

Viewing such an assembly as that of the closing of the Eucharistic Congress and seeing the Catholic migrants sharing our common faith, few people, possibly, will realise that this has been achieved by years of strenuous work by the Catholic Migration Offices throughout Australia. People coming from other lands have very many problems, when they arrive in this country, not the least of which is the opportunity to follow their faith. Unfamiliar with the English language, their recourse to the Catholic priests in Australia could be limited. [2840]

Almost simultaneously with the entrance of the Australian government into the field of Migration, the Church saw the pastoral obligations to these peoples. This gave rise to the establishment of a Federal Catholic Migration Policy to be implemented both by the Federal and State Catholic Directors. [2841]

Initially this meant the searching for chaplains from countries whence the migrants came. Over the period of this migration and still today there have been very many chaplains come to work in Australia. Their work has been pastoral in the widest sense. The chaplains have been itinerant in that wherever there have been groups of migrants, they have endeavoured to reach them. Primarily, the purpose of such visitation has been to provide piritual care. But, in addition, as the migrants settled, [2842]

their problems multiplied and again the chaplains sought to assist them. This in turn expanded the work of the Catholic Migration Offices.

The Catholic Migration Offices, the Australian Directors and the chaplains can, [2843] however, only do as much in the field as the offerings of the Australian Catholic people permit. This is why there is an Immigration Sunday. Australian Catholics must recognise that successful migration and especially integration, of these people can only be secured by real charity of those who receive them. As the Congress theme states *“Love one another as I have loved you”*. This charity by the Australian Catholics must be personal to each individual migrant whom they might meet. Secondly it means the assistance year by year to enable Catholic Migration work to continue. This means providing chaplains for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the migrant people. This must be the resolution of each and every Immigration Sunday.

Let us express gratitude to God on Immigration Sunday, especially this year when [2844] the fruits of migration are so beautifully exemplified in the final Eucharistic devotion at the Congress. Let us thank God too for His changeless concern and unfailing care for each and all of us, exclaiming with the Psalmist:

*“May all peoples praise you, God. The earth hath yielded her fruit My God, Our God, bless us: And all the ends of the earth fear Him” (Ps.66:5-7).*

For the Australian Episcopal Conference Commission for Social and Charitable Works

**A. R. E. Thomas,**  
Bishop of Bahurst,  
Secretary

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Source: Archives of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO), Canberra, Australia.

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