

Girrawheen primary schoolers celebrate faith ahead of Migrant and Refugee Week

By Matthew Lau

On Friday 10 August, Girrawheen Parish Priest Father Albert Samedi celebrated a whole school Mass – assisted by Deacon Greg Lowe – for Our Lady of Mercy Primary School to honour St Mary MacKillop and St Lawrence, whose feast days occurred during that week.

WACMRO Director Dcn Lowe spoke to *The eRecord* about the significance of Migrant and Refugee Sunday on 26 August.

“We all have a need to feel welcomed when we go somewhere new; we all want to feel safe and have someone accompany us when we are hurt or in need, and to help us get back on our feet again,” he said.

“That is all the Pope is asking when he uses words like ‘welcome’, ‘promote’, ‘protect’, ‘integrate’ in his Migrant and Refugee Sunday message to the parishes.”

In his homily, Dcn Lowe showed the school children a seed and a small green plant to illustrate the gospel message of growing in generosity as St Mary MacKillop had done (Jn 12: 24 – 26) by understanding that people are more important than any treasure, as St Lawrence demonstrated in his life story.

Dcn Lowe finished by showing a picture of Pope Francis and explaining the Pope’s call to come to the generous aid of all who are in need no matter who they are or where they are from.

Thursday 19 July 2018 marked five years since the Australian and Papua New Guinean governments signed a regional resettlement agreement between the two nations.

The agreement, a follow-up on the Joint Partnership Declaration signed in May 2013, was for any future maritime arrivals entering Australian waters to be transferred to Manus Island for processing and resettlement in Papua New Guinea.

Fr Maurizio Pettena CS, Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office, said it remains a protracted situation for many.

“In this time, we have heard and seen many tragic consequences of our government’s harsh policy of indefinite and inhumane detention of asylum seekers at Manus Island, and the subsequent transit centres in Lorengau,” Fr Pettena said.

“In these five years, we have seen riots take place and have seen the death of seven asylum seekers on Manus Island – with some taking their own life. The deteriorating mental health of these men is of the utmost importance.”

The indefinite nature of their substandard living conditions and inadequate access to healthcare continues to negatively affect their mental wellbeing, he added.

“The Catholic Church has always advocated for and insisted on the importance of taking a holistic and integrated approach, focusing on the dignity of the human person.

“The human rights and dignity of these refugees must always be respected, and be the first consideration, for decision-makers. Australia must also look at adopting national policies that prefer alternatives to detention,” Fr Pettana concluded.

Migrant and Refugee Week is from 20 to 26 August, with Migrant and Refugee Sunday being celebrated in several parishes across the Archdiocese of Perth.

The resource kit for parishes to make use of during the week can be downloaded at www.acmro.org.au

For further information about Migrant and Refugee Week, contact WACMRO Office Manager Grace Kurniawan on 9220 5950 or wacmro@perthcatholic.org.au