



## **26<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year** – Refugees and Migrant Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 2025

6.30pm Clarkes Hill, 9.00am Buninyong, 10.30am Ballarat East (Baptisms)

### **Homily**

It's just possible that some of you here at Mass today were attending Mass back in 1950 in a Catholic Church somewhere in Australia. I'm not asking you for a show of hands! It's 75 years ago and on the first Sunday of February 1950, the Australian Bishops had asked their priests to read a statement on migration<sup>1</sup> to Australia – there's no way of knowing how many complied with this request, though we can assume that there wasn't 100% take up! What the Bishop's statement on migration called for was "great generosity" and "true unselfishness" to be the "guiding lights" for Catholics in Australia as they responded to the newly arrived migrants seeking to build a home "beneath the Southern Cross". The letter, issued in January 1950, with the instruction that it "be read in all Churches on the First Sunday of February" called on Australian Catholics to exercise their moral duty to extend kindness, practical assistance, and hospitality to new arrivals, especially those who had been displaced by war and persecution.

The end of World War II saw devastating impacts on many places throughout the world – Europe in particular. Post War migration to Australia was prolific<sup>2</sup> for many including British, Croatian, Dutch, Estonian, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese and Polish with millions displaced and many millions seeking refuge. The transformation of Australian society through the arrival of these migrants, those displaced or those responding to labour shortages was revolutionary. It came at a time when Australia adopted the 'populate or perish' policy. It's very likely that some who are amongst us today were migrants to Australia at that time.

---

<sup>1</sup> [1950 Pastoral Letter on Immigration](#) Read in all Churches on the First Sunday of February 1950

<sup>2</sup> [Between 1945 and 1965, two million immigrants arrived in Australia.](#) Among the new immigrants were the first government-sanctioned non-British migrants.

On this Migrant and Refugee Sunday, we're challenged by biblical texts that demand justice, call for compassion and a preferential option for the poor and marginalised. I'm conscious that at this same time, across the western world there are thousands attending rallies protesting migration, calling for the closing of borders and a tightening of restrictions.

Not so long ago, the United Nations published a paper which creatively described the world as a village of 100 people<sup>3</sup>. Staying consistent with the international statistics the United Nations tells us that our global village looks like this. There are 58 Asians, 10 Europeans, 12 from the Americas, 19 Africans, and just 1 from Oceania. The languages spoken would hear 18 speaking Chinese, 14 English, 8 speaking Hindi, and 7 speaking Spanish. The remaining 49 would speak Portuguese, Indonesian, Japanese, German, French and many others. There are 52 women and 48 men of whom 30 have fairer skin and 70 are darker skinned. 91 are heterosexual while nine are gay. Only one of the 100 has a University education, while six people in our village own 64% of the wealth and all of them are Americans. 80 people live in substandard housing without electricity, clean water and sewerage. 70 cannot read and 50 suffer from malnutrition.

This village analysis identifies the great disparities in our global village.

In his message for this Migrant and Refugee Sunday<sup>4</sup>, Pope Leo reminds us that *The current global context is sadly marked by wars, violence, injustice and extreme weather events, which force millions of people to leave their homelands in search of refuge elsewhere. The widespread tendency to look after the interests of limited communities poses a serious threat to the sharing of responsibility, multilateral cooperation, the pursuit of the common good and global solidarity for the benefit of our entire human family... In a world darkened by war and injustice, even when all seems lost, migrants and refugees stand as messengers of hope. Their courage and tenacity bear heroic testimony to a faith that sees beyond what our eyes can see and gives them the strength to defy death on the various contemporary migration routes.*

On this 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1950 statement from the Bishops of Australia, their words remain just as applicable to us today. Once again, our nation serves as a sanctuary and refuge for thousands seeking a new life—whether fleeing hardships in their homelands or pursuing the opportunities, freedom, and prosperity that Australia offers, and we are called again to extend the hand of welcome to migrants; “patience, kindness, sympathy and practical help must be rendered to all unfailingly and in God’s Name”.

This timeless call to hospitality and generosity remains as vital today as it was seventy-five years ago. In Pope Leo’s words, this call today is for us to become a living witness to hope

---

<sup>3</sup> [Global Village: A 100-Person World | PDF | Politics | Social Science](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Message of the Holy Father for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2025](#)

and to build a community that recognise migrants and refugees as brother and sister, part of a family which they can express their talents and participate fully in their new community life.

Immigration is not merely an economic or political issue—it is a moral one. It speaks to our priorities of compassion, justice, and hospitality to welcome the stranger, work for the common good and stand in solidarity with those who suffer.

Fr Justin Driscoll, Co-Pastor