

**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES****17 January 2010**

*"I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35)*

The celebration of the World Day of Prayer for Migrants and Refugees gives an opportunity to express the Church's constant concern for those who, in different ways, experience a life of emigration. The Holy Father, in his address for this occasion writes, *"this is a phenomenon which, as I wrote in the Encyclical Caritas in Veritate, upsets us due to the number of people involved and the social, economic, political, cultural and religious problems it raises on account of the dramatic challenges it poses to both national and international communities. The migrant is a human person who possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance (cf. n. 62)."*

This year's theme is *Minor Migrants and Refugees*. How can one fail to consider migrant and refugee minors? As a child, Jesus himself experienced migration for, as the Gospel recounts, in order to flee the threats of Herod, he had to seek refuge in Egypt together with Joseph and Mary (cf. Mt 2:14).

While the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that the best interests of the minor shall always be safeguarded (cf. Art. 3, 1), recognizing his or her fundamental human rights as equal to the rights of adults, unfortunately this does not always happen. Although public awareness has increased in regard to protecting minors, much needs to be done to avoid further risk of exploitation.

Attention should be given to minor migrants in a number of areas:

- those who need a social environment that fosters their development
- those living in a foreign land without effective points of reference generates
- the situation of children born in the host country or of those who do not live with their parents
- adolescents belonging to two cultures
- opportunities for education and work

Hospitality and solidarity to strangers, especially if they are children, is essential today. The Church proclaims this when she opens her arms and strives to have the rights of migrants and refugees respected, moving the leaders of Nations, and those in charge of international organizations and institutions to promote opportune initiatives for their support.

*“To love God with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind, but together with love of neighbor” (cf. Mt 22:37-39)*

As we begin a new year, we pray for the work of the **House of Welcome**, committed to serving asylum seekers and refugees without discrimination. This project was established in 2003 to provide a place of welcome for asylum seekers and refugees and to assist them in their transition to life in the Australian community. The Province provides the House of Welcome with a property at Carramar for administration and to be a drop-in centre for clients.

The NSW Ecumenical Council has appointed Cyril O’Connor as the Coordinator of the House of Welcome – NSW Relief Institute Inc. Cyril worked as Refugee Programs Assistant with the NSW Ecumenical Council in 2008 and brings with him considerable experience in both business/human relations and refugee and community development work. He follows on from Fr. Jim Carty who has been such an inspiration in his work with the House of Welcome.

*Mary Most Holy, you, together with St. Joseph and the Child Jesus, experienced the suffering of exile. You were forced to flee to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod. Today we entrust the men, women and children who live as migrants and refugees to your maternal protection.*

*Grant us the grace to welcome them with Christian hospitality, so that that these brothers and sisters of ours may find acceptance and understanding on their journey.*

*May all those who are far from their place of birth find in the Church a home where no one is a stranger. We ask this in the name of your Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

Source: [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/migration/index\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/migration/index_en.htm)

18-25 January is **World Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

Theme: *You are Witnesses of These Things* (Luke 24:48)

For prayers and other resources please refer to <http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/faith-unity/wopcu>

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