

Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants Liturgy Notes and Resources

Sunday 18 June 2017

"Do not tire of courageously living the Gospel, which calls you to recognize and welcome the Lord Jesus among the smallest and most vulnerable." Pope Francis, 2017, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference marks a special Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants on a Sunday close to World Refugee Day (20 June). This year, the Day of Prayer falls on Sunday 18 June 2017, the Feast of Corpus Christi. We remember that we are one body in Christ, and one human family.

Over this last year, we have seen no end to the crisis in Syria which has affected more than 13.5 million people. We have witnessed the devastating impact of drought and civil war in South Sudan, which has led to the displacement of more than 1.5 million people. In the midst of great challenge and devastation, Pope Francis, in this year's message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, draws our attention to child migrants and the most vulnerable and voiceless in these situations. We are called to maintain hope and courageously work for the protection and welcome of the most vulnerable migrants and refugees.

In New Zealand, we have seen a swell of generosity and welcome from communities and parishes for refugees and former refugees. This Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants, we take the opportunity to share stories of encounter and to hold in our prayers the young and most vulnerable caught in situations of crisis and conflict.

Liturgy notes

Readings for the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants, 18 June 2017 (*Liturgical Year A: Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ*):

First reading: Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14B-16A ...*Do not forget the LORD, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt...*

Psalm: Psalm 147:12-15, 19-20 ...*He has granted peace in your borders; with the best of wheat he fills you...*

Second reading: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 ...*Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

Gospel: John 6:51-58 ...*Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me...*

Prayer of the Faithful: Please feel free to use any or all of these, and/or to write your own:

For refugees who are separated from their families, keep them safe and guide them towards eventual reunification with their loved ones. Lord hear us, *Lord hear our prayer.*

For children and young people who are forced to leave their homes, provide caring adults around them and unite the international community to work for the care and protection of these young ones. Lord hear us, *Lord hear our prayer.*

For the Church, give us strength and courage to continue to offer a dignified welcome to those new to our country and to recognise your face in those we welcome. Lord hear us, *Lord hear our prayer.*

Ideas for the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants in parishes

Poster - Caritas has prepared a poster for the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants focused on the theme this year. We would appreciate it if you display a poster in each mass centre. More posters are available upon request to caritas@caritas.org.nz.

Sharing stories of welcome and encounter - have you or people from your parish been involved in supporting new migrants and refugees? Invite people in your parish to share stories of encounter and welcome.

Pray for peace and the protection and integration of child refugees and migrants - find out about the work of Caritas Syria with children, watch the video "*The lost children of Aleppo*" at www.caritas.org.nz/solidarity-syria-appeal

Support services to refugees and migrants - find out what is happening in your diocese to support refugees and migrants and get involved.

Retiring collection - Many parishes undertake a retiring collection or other small fundraising activity towards the work of supporting refugees in New Zealand or overseas. You may wish to use the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants to raise funds for:

- Diocesan initiatives to resettle former refugees in New Zealand
- Refugee Family Reunification Trust (in Wellington, Hamilton and Christchurch)
- Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand's Peace in the Middle East Appeal or East Africa Crisis Appeal

Celebrating and sharing a story of welcome and encounter – the journey of a Dunedin parish group

“While appreciating the issues, and often the suffering and tragedy of migration, as too the difficulties connected with the demands of offering a dignified welcome to these persons, the Church nevertheless encourages us to recognize God’s plan.” Pope Francis, 2017, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

For this Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants, we have included a story of welcome from the Dunedin Diocese. If your parish has a story of welcome, we hope the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants can be an opportunity for sharing.

In this year’s Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis encourages us not to give up hope in the face of challenge.

A group of parishioners in Dunedin, together with others in the wider community, have raised their hands to do what it takes to welcome refugees to Dunedin and put hope into action.

Lynne Toomey, parishioner at Dunedin South Pastoral Area, is a Red Cross volunteer supporting a Palestinian refugee family. She was also involved with the Dunedin Refugee Steering Group when it first began.

She reflects: *“We just formed a little group, initially, of parishioners and Fr Gerard Aynsley... asking what realistically could we do? Okay, we could give money, but could we do anything in our city ourselves?”*

Over three months, the little group grew to involve representatives from various Christian denominations, the Abrahamic Inter-faith Group, the Muslim Association, NGOs, City Council, Government departments, Red Cross and community groups. The Dunedin Refugee Steering Group was formed and in November 2015, along with the City Council, they successfully advocated for Dunedin to become a refugee resettlement city.

For parishioner Karen O’Neill, this was the opportunity she was waiting for to get involved. Karen said: *“The news from Syria, of families constantly being displaced and trying to get across the Mediterranean, it’s just horrendous, it’s still horrendous. I wanted to be involved with supporting a family.”*

Both Karen and Lynne became Red Cross volunteers around the same time. Red Cross volunteers are trained and placed with a refugee family for six months to

support them with the basics of settling into New Zealand. Karen was part of a team of volunteers working with a Syrian family of six. She said: *“You remember when you left home and moved away from your family, it was gradual. You probably knew a little of how to manage, but for a former refugee family it isn’t moving away by choice. It is exile. Everything change, suddenly. New culture, new language.”*

The volunteers help with a range of tasks, from going to the supermarket to helping liaise with social service providers and Government departments. The Dunedin South Pastoral Area supported Lynne, Karen and other volunteers from their parish by responding to requests for various items needed by the refugee families, such as baby clothes and high chairs.

Lynne reflects on her time with the refugee family and shares: *“It’s lifegiving for me to see them settling into Dunedin... Having the opportunity to be a very tiny part of the life of this family, just shows that we are all people together. Our common humanity has really been reinforced for me.”*

Recently, Auckland’s St Peter’s College social justice group raised money to help the Dunedin Diocese in their work with refugees. The Church’s subgroup of the original Dunedin Refugee Steering Group, with the help of the Red Cross and the Muslim University Students Association, will be using some of this money to organise a camp later this year for former refugee youth and other Dunedin youth to come together for a time of fun and sharing their diverse experiences.

When Karen was asked what she would say to other parishioners thinking about getting involved, she said: *“Go for it, be clear about your boundaries and what you can give, then go for it!”*