



27 July 2017

*Thursday of the 16<sup>th</sup> Week in Ordinary Time*

Dear Friends,

A recurring theme in our Gospel Message is the need for all of us to open our hearts and minds to the plight of those less fortunate than ourselves. To this end, I invite representatives from our each of our parishes, our schools, our agencies and our religious congregations to attend the launch of a year-long Diocesan Journey:

**“Walking with Refugees and People Seeking Protection”**

The aim of the Journey is to galvanise a Diocese-wide, faith-filled urge to bring about a community and political culture that values fair and compassionate treatment of people seeking refuge and protection in Australia.

**The launch will take place during Migrant and Refugee Week  
Sunday 27 August 2017 from 2pm to 4pm  
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Hall  
7 Grantham St Seven Hills**

**Our special guest speaker will be Father Tom Smolich SJ, the newly appointed  
International Director of Jesuit Refugee Services.**

I will be inviting all Catholics living in the Parramatta Diocese to think seriously and to pray earnestly about the challenges that face us all as we walk with this year long journey.

Firstly, it is time for us to deal decently and compassionately with people seeking protection - while still preventing people smuggling, saving lives at sea and maintaining the integrity of Australia's borders.

Secondly, it is time for us as a responsible world citizen, a wealthy and resourceful nation to develop the policies that enshrine the best of our traditions rather than the worst of our natures.

Most importantly, as Christians, we cannot remain content with the status quo, especially when that status quo is less than what God wants for us as individuals and as a community. Pope Francis recently said on the Feast of the Most Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph that “As we fix our gaze on the Holy Family of Nazareth as they were forced to become refugees, let us think of the tragedy of those migrants

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and refugees who are victims of rejection and exploitation, who are victims of human trafficking and of slave labor." *Angelus address 29 December 2013.*

In the months following the launch of our Journey the Diocesan Social Justice Office will be initiating a series of community conversations across every parish and every school within the Diocese. These conversations, held in collaboration with several partner agencies already working in the field, will be our key to engaging the hearts and minds of all Catholics in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains – leading to a better understanding of the issues affecting those trying to seek a better life in our beautiful country. I encourage widespread participation.

Following the Launch those attending are invited to stay for a light afternoon tea. To assist with catering, we ask that you kindly indicate if you will be attending the launch, by telephoning the Social Justice Office 8838 3461 or letting us know online at: <https://register.eventarc.com/38860/invitaiton-to-migrant-and-refugee-sunday-launch-27-th-august>

**"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat,  
I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,  
I was a stranger and you invited me in."**

*(Matthew 25:35)*

Yours sincerely in Christ,



**Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD STL  
Bishop of Parramatta**