

# Social Justice Sunday Liturgy Notes

September 27, 2015

26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time

## **Social Justice Statement 2015–2016**

***For Those Who've Come Across the Seas:  
Justice for refugees and asylum seekers***

### **Overview:**

The title of the 2015–2016 Statement is *For Those Who've Come Across the Seas: Justice for refugees and asylum seekers*. It is taken from the second verse of Australia's National Anthem and reminds us all of how our nation has aspired to be a place of welcome and inclusion.

In this Social Justice Statement, Australia's Bishops ask us to re-examine our responses to refugees and asylum seekers. The Statement reminds us of the nearly 60 million people around the world who are displaced from their homes and of the war and violence that are devastating countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. When people come to us seeking refuge, can we in conscience respond to them with cruel and self-defeating policies such as offshore processing and indefinite detention?

This Social Justice Statement is inspired by the example of Pope Francis on his 2013 visit to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, where he met the survivors of a refugee tragedy and mourned and prayed for those who had died.

Inspired by the example of Pope Francis, Australia's Bishops ask how we can show leadership both here and overseas in forging a humane response to the challenge of refugees.

### **For the Parish Bulletin**

We celebrate Social Justice Sunday on 27th September. The 2015–16 Social Justice Statement is titled *For those who've come across the seas: justice for refugees and asylum seekers*. In this Social Justice Statement, Australia's Bishops ask us to re-examine our responses to refugees and asylum seekers. They remind us of the nearly 60 million people around the world who are displaced from their homes and of the war and violence that are devastating countries in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. When people come to us seeking refuge, can we in conscience respond to them with cruel and self-defeating policies such as offshore processing and indefinite detention?

For further details about the Social Justice Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website [www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) or call (02) 8306 3499.

### **Liturgy Notes**

The following notes may be of use to link the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time with Social Justice Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2015.

### **Welcome**

Today is Social Justice Sunday. The Australian Catholic Bishops have published a Social Justice Statement, titled: *For those who've come across the seas: Justice for refugees and asylum seekers*. The Statement challenges us to see the issue of asylum seekers and refugees in a global context which puts the reality of people seeking protection in Australia into a realistic perspective. It calls us to respond to this challenge with generosity.

## Readings

The Readings for the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year B) hold challenging insights into the theme of this year's Social Justice Statement.

### Numbers 11:25-29

In the first reading from the book of **Numbers**, the seventy elders call into question the ministry of Eldad and Medad, even though they have clearly been gifted by the Spirit. Moses supports the work of Eldad and Medad and wishes that everyone was so filled with the Spirit.

### Psalm 18

The psalm reminds us to that *the law of the Lord is perfect*. The Social Justice statement reminds us that we need be more open to hearing the law of the Lord and not be swayed by popular and mean spirited arguments.

### James 5:1-6

In the letter of James the rich are chastised for hoarding their wealth and failing to share it with those in need.

### Gospel: Mark 9:38-48

The Gospel reiterates the message of the first reading: that nobody has a monopoly on the Spirit of God. We all called to respect the gifts among all women and men. The second part of the Gospel reminds us of the dire consequences of *scandalising the little ones*.

### Reflection on the readings/Homily Notes

In the Gospel we hear the disciples complaining to Jesus *because someone is casting out devils in your name*. The reason they are upset is because *He is not one of us*. So they try to stop him.

Jesus' response is: *You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us*.

Jesus' response is a challenge; it was a challenge to his disciples to move beyond old notions of power, where they as his associates should be the only ones performing miracles – and getting the credit. They are in a way, defending what they think is *their* territory. The healing actions of others are also showing up their inadequacies as disciples of Jesus.

In our own time, there has been much talk in the public arena about who is *in* and who is *out* and challenges made to individuals and organisations to declare *whose side are you on?* There are instances of those in power discrediting those who are doing good, because their words and actions show them up as inadequate, bigoted and cruel. This creates a climate of narrow minded rhetoric that plays to people's fears and prejudices

Jesus reminds his disciples, and us, that his ministry is not about power, or territory or glory but about bringing healing and life and bringing it to all people. The disciples were concerned with exclusivity, Jesus was preaching and practising inclusivity.

This year's Social Justice Statement: ***For Those Who've Come Across the Seas***, reflects Australia as a nation jealously guarding its territory and opting for exclusivity – in contrast to the ideals we proclaim in our national anthem:

*The essential issue for Australia is whether we will live up to our reputation as the land of the 'fair go' that lends a hand to those in desperate circumstances. In the second verse of our National Anthem we sing:*

*For those who've come across the seas  
We've boundless plains to share;  
With courage let us all combine  
To Advance Australia Fair.*

*We sing with pride and generosity, of the welcome and unity we offer. This ideal stands in stark contrast, however, to the self-interest, incarceration and exclusion that have characterised our nation's response over many years to asylum seekers who arrive by boat.*

Both the first reading and the Gospel remind us that God's Spirit is not bound by our categories. The Spirit and the work of God is not limited to people of a certain gender, race, nation, ethnic group, age, or position. Indeed, the work of God's Spirit is often most powerfully manifested in those who do not fit our categories. The moments of challenge and of grace may well be those moments that call us beyond our comfort zones.

*We know that we are better than this. As Christians, we know that it is within us to hear the call of Jesus. As Australians we have shown ourselves willing to take the path of generosity and leadership. We can do so again.*

*The words and actions of Jesus demand a response. We do not open our hearts and our home to vulnerable people simply because they are 'deserving' of charity or compassion. We take them in, provide shelter and bandage their wounds because they are equal to us in dignity. They are no longer 'aliens' (Lev. 19:33) but our brothers and sisters.*

*As people of faith we go further and ask: do we see the face of Jesus Christ in those who've come across the seas? Do we recognise the family and child fleeing Herod's massacre? And what of those who have not survived?*

*There is another way; a way to make a real difference. No longer need we fear the alien approaching our shores as a burden. Instead, we would realise that we are blessed because we do have the means to welcome our brothers and sisters. This other way is characterised by acceptance, leadership and generosity.*

Social Justice Statement 2015-16: *For Those Who've Come Across the Seas*

## **Prayers of the Faithful**

**Celebrant:** We pray to the God of all people that our hearts be open to Jesus' message of love and compassion for all people.

We pray for Pope Francis that his example of compassion for asylum seekers and refugees inspire us to act with generosity to those in need of protection.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for Bishops, priests, religious and leaders in the Catholic community. that they inspire us to create a universal communion which excludes nothing and no one.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for our nation; that we open our eyes, our minds and our hearts so that we may see, understand and welcome our brothers and sisters.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for the leaders of our nation: that they move beyond narrow political concerns to a mature and compassionate response to the global reality of people forced from their homes by violence and conflict.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for those forced to flee their families, their homes and their country; that they find safe passage and helping hands.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for those who generously receive men, women and children seeking protection: that they be blessed in abundance for sharing generously what little they have.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

We pray for those who have died, especially those who have perished while seeking asylum in another country. May they rest in peace.

Let us pray to the Lord: ***R. Lord hear our prayer***

**Celebrant:** May our prayers rise before you God of all people and nations. May your grace fill the world and bring forth the reign of justice and mercy. We ask this through Christ Our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **Suggested Music**

All are Welcome (Marty Haugen)  
Abide O Spirit of Life (D. Haas)  
A New Heart for a New World (Watts/O'Brien)  
Amazing Grace (Traditional)  
Bread of life, Hope for the World (B. Farrell)  
Bring Forth the Kingdom (M. Haugen)  
Christ Be Our Light (D. Haas)  
Christ Be Our Light (B. Farrell)  
City of God (St Louis Jesuits)  
Come to the Feast (M. Haugen)  
Come As You are. (Deidre Brown)  
Galilee Song (Frank Anderson)  
Harvest of Justice (D. Haas)  
Hosea [Come Back to Me] (Weston Priory)  
No Right to Crush God's People (Peter Kearney)  
The Beatitudes (Peter Kearney)  
The God of Second Chances (D. Haas)  
The Lord Hears the Cry of the Poor (St Louis Jesuits)  
Voices That Challenge (D. Haas)  
We Are Called (D. Haas)

***Suggestion:*** The following prayer, issued with the Statement as a prayer card, could be given to parishioners or printed on the bulletin and said together.

#### ***For those Who've Come Across the Seas***

God of mercy, help me to remember:  
My ancestors came across the seas!  
Help me keep in my mind  
Those who came long ago  
And those who now come to our shores.

As I face you in prayer, God of Compassion,  
I remember my country's words:  
*Send them back or Stop the boats.*  
Then I fear, not your anger  
But the steady gaze of boundless love  
and unlimited compassion  
That impel me to hear Jesus' command:  
*Love one another, as I have loved you*  
Or Pope Francis' call to open our hearts  
To a universal communion  
Which excludes nothing and no one.

Daring to step into such relationship, I pray  
For those forced to leave family, home and all they hold dear;  
May they find safe passage and helping hands.  
I pray for an end to the wars and oppression  
that forced them to leave;  
I pray that those who welcome them are blessed in abundance.

And with deep humility and a heart hungry for justice,  
I pray that we Australians, citizens and leaders,  
Open our eyes, our minds and our hearts  
That we may see, understand and welcome our brothers and sisters.

May our change of heart penetrate to our beginnings  
As strangers in this land.  
May we allow those we displaced  
– the First People of this land – to welcome us.  
Then knowing, in humility, what it is to *be* welcomed,  
We will know how to welcome the strangers who come to our shores.

This we ask in the name of Jesus your Son,  
In whom we are no longer strangers. Amen.

**For further details about the Catholic Bishops' Statement, visit the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council website [www.acsjc.org.au](http://www.acsjc.org.au) or call (02) 8306 3499**

**The ACSJC website also has resources available for download free of charge. They include a PowerPoint presentation and a Community Education resource suitable for parish groups and senior students.**