2 July, 2015.

Dear Friends,


_for Those Who’ve Come Across the Seas_

Social Justice Sunday will be celebrated this year on 27 September. I am writing to inform you about the Catholic Bishops’ Social Justice Statement and how parishes, schools and Congregations can access this document.

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 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.

The Statement will be launched on 9 September. Copies of the Statement can be ordered now from the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council by using the attached order form. Additionally, the Statement will be available for download on the websites of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (www.catholic.org.au) and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au) from the week of the launch. In the attached summary sheet there is a suggested entry that can be used by parishes, schools and groups as Social Justice Sunday approaches.

I commend this Statement to you and your contacts and would welcome your participation in its promotion.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Denis J. Hart

Archbishop Denis J. Hart,
President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.