



**National Program on Refugees and Displaced Peoples**

# REFUGEE SUNDAY

**25<sup>th</sup> August**

*August 25, 2002 is the eve of the first anniversary of the "M.V. Tampa" picking up 433 asylum seekers from their sinking boat on August 26, 2001.*

## LITURGY: PROTECTING THE PERSECUTED

### Call to Worship

**Leader:** There is no place where You cannot reach:  
**People:** God who made the heavens and the earth.  
**Leader:** There is no journey which You have not traveled:  
**People:** God who shares our life in Jesus Christ.  
**Leader:** There are no people beyond your care:  
**People:** God who is the Spirit, the Comforter.  
 Let us worship God!

### Greeting or Gathering

**Leader:** Let us "Gather into" our community of faith some of the people who are uprooted from their homes and countries around the world.....

#### **The People could do some of the following actions:**

The names of countries where there are known to be refugees or internally displaced people could be read and a symbol such as a flower, poem or picture pinned or stuck on a display board or the altar cloth, or candles lit, or ribbons or pins placed on a world map.

**Hymn No 1 \*** ( see notes for suggestions)

### Prayers of Adoration

**Leader:** Loving God, we give thanks that You care for all people, but particularly the vulnerable and abused. We give thanks that You give some people the insight and courage to dissent, to act against cruel policies, to raise the hard questions to those in power and make us all rethink

**People:** Loving God, thank you for the abundance and beauty of Your creation, meant for the enjoyment of all people. Thank you for the richness of different peoples and their cultures.

### Prayers of Confession

**Leader:** Gracious God, we now bring before You our failings and omissions.

For those times when our fears, suspicions, avoidance of issues for fear of upsetting our family and friends or our lack of energy and action have damaged or estranged others,

**People:** Forgive us and deepen our courage and wisdom.

**Leader:** For not loving our enemies and not treating those who disagree with us with respect,

**People:** Forgive us and deepen our courage and wisdom.

**Leader:** For our failings – at individual, community and government levels- in generosity, compassion and imagination to devise better policies to assist refugees, asylum seekers and those in our immigration detention centres.

**People:** Forgive us and deepen our courage and wisdom.

## **Declaration of Forgiveness**

**All:** We receive your gifts: forgiveness, healing, courage and wisdom.

## **Service of the Word**

**Exodus 1.8 - 2.10** Resistance to persecution and unexpected allies in mercy

**Psalms 124** God, the Protector of Refugees

**Romans 12. 1-8** Life in God's Service

**Matthew 16. 13 -30** Peter recognises Jesus as the Messiah

**Hymn No 2 \***

**The Sermon** ( some resources are provided in the notes)

**Hymn No 3 \* and Offering**

**Affirmation of Faith** (a more traditional creed may be preferred)

We worship one God.

In whose image all people are made,

Who calls us no longer to be strangers, but friends,

To whose service we are summoned,

By whose presence we are renewed.

## **Announcements**

## **Prayer of Intercession**

*For our nation and leaders:*

Wise and compassionate God, as a nation, help us to bear the burdens refugees and asylum-seekers carry and not simply seek to shift the burden onto others. Call our leaders to justice, generosity and compassion. Help them create and implement strategies that are fair, will benefit the Australian community and treat refugees and asylum-seekers as human with dignity and care.

*For refugees:*

O God, our comforter, we ask you to comfort the broken-hearted and protect the vulnerable. In places where violence destroys lives, bring your peace. In places where hatred disfigures communities, bring your love. God of justice, compassion, grace and mercy, hold back the arm of those who would do violence and wickedness. Bring down the proud and the powerful and lift up the downtrodden.

*A closing prayer:*

Christ, our friend, when we were once distant strangers you proclaimed peace and brought us near. Help us extend your grace and welcome in word and deed to all around us. Help us to live out the values you have called us. Let us not be conformed to the world and behave with selfishness or indifference to the needs of others, but follow the way of your son, who came not to be served, but to serve. Let our lives and our words witness to your grace and love that reach out to the last and the least.

**The Eucharist** ( if planned)

**Hymn No 4\***

**The Blessing and Dismissal**

God bless our eyes so that we will recognise injustices.

God bless our ears so that we will hear the cry of the stranger.

God bless our mouths so that we will speak words of welcome to newcomers.

God bless our shoulders so we will be able to bear the weight of struggling for justice.

God bless our hands so that we can work together with all people to establish peace.

**NOTES FOR THE LITURGY**

**1. HYMNS**

**No 1:** Some suggestions are: Together in Song, TIS (ie AHB II), Numbers 474; 621; 447;636 (This is also in Sing Alleluia No 39), As One Voice (AOV), Numbers 37, 83

**No 2:** Some suggestions are: TIS 580 ( "Maker" may replace "Father" for more inclusive language); 611; 650; 657 (is also Sing Alleluia No 42); AOV 126, 149

**No 3:** Some suggestions are: TIS 473; 587; 468 or Sing Alleluia 59; 25;88 (but 88 needs alteration for more inclusive language), AOV 63

**No 4:** Some suggestions are: TIS 615; 547; 467, AOV 86, 188

**2. SOURCE OF MATERIALS & OTHER SUGGESTIONS**

**Call to Worship , The Gathering, Affirmation of Faith:** From "Refugees and Uprooted People" liturgy , possibly from the World Council of Churches (WCC). For **Affirmation of Faith** see also "Uniting in Worship People's Book", p 133, no 11.

See **Prayers for the Celebration of the Roman Catholic Eucharist** from the Sacramentary Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions Number 29 or 30

**Prayers of Intercession.** Based largely on TEAR insert in its Refugee Sunday kit. See website: [www.tear.org.au](http://www.tear.org.au)

**Blessing:** Modified form of the original by Beverly O'Grady, Canada, found in "On Frequent Journeys".

## **SERMON RESOURCES**

Materials and points that may assist your preparation:

**\* From the readings:**

**Exodus 1.8-2.10 :** (1) Fear and suspicion of a different ethnic group leads Pharaoh first to harsh labour treatment, then persecution and finally genocidal policies ( the order to kill all Hebrew baby boys).Note the courage of Egyptian women in resisting these cruel policies - Shiphrah & Puah, the widwives, and Pharaoh's own daughter.

(2) The present Australian government policies are impacting on both children in detention and on children of released refugees families, struggling to survive on limited resources provided to Temporary Protection Visa (TPV) holders.

(3) Women in the caring professions- medicine, psychiatry, religious orders, the ministry and welfare - face challenges and dilemmas in caring for children in our immigration detention centres and unaccompanied minors released into the community.

**Psalms 124 :** God protects refugees and the Israelites are joyous at escaping persecution and death and being free. Asylum seekers who come to Australia are driven by the same age-old concerns and desires. People deserve respect in their treatment by us, regardless of whether they have felt it necessary to borrow and sell-up their assets to pay so-called "people smugglers" for the flight. Not everyone may be found to be a refugee under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention criteria Some asylum seekers may have to return to their home country or a third country but Australia should adopt the most humane policy options, especially given the small number that arrive in Australia.

Rather than spend money on detention and expensive "border control", the Australian Government can better spend it in meeting the world's refugee problems by assisting the world-wide work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), pursuing peace and human rights efforts overseas in source countries, increasing Australian staff to provide any or better access to people in refugee camps who wish to apply to come to Australia and increase the annual off-shore refugee intake as part of this.

**Romans 12: 1-8** (1) We need to seek God's will and values on these complex issues. Not everyone in the church or community will agree but we can use our different gifts, humbly but strongly, as part of one body ( the church) in God's service and for the well being of all ,especially the most vulnerable.

**Matthew 16. 13-20** (1) Jesus' ministry as The Messiah is one of service, liberation and redemption. His reign is inclusive, especially reaching out to the lost, vulnerable, marginalised and even disreputable. Like Peter, we can be "rocks", firm foundations to help convey God's love to the world.

**\* On the current Australian Government policy debate-** See other information insert sheets in the NCCA Refugee Sunday 2002 kit on **The Pacific Solution, Temporary Protection Visa holders**. Also consider the media debate on detention, especially children in detention.

**\* The "Action Ideas and Resources" sheet in the kit** provides both websites and groups for more detailed information on these issues and practical actions for your congregation to consider.

Compiled by Mr John Ball, National Co-ordinator, Program on Refugees & Displaced People. **Contact:** [jball@ncca.org.au](mailto:jball@ncca.org.au) and phone: 02 92992215 (NCCA switchboard).