

# Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants

## Where is your brother or sister?



“I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry, ‘Where is your brother?’ (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Let us not pretend and look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. This issue involves everyone!”

*Pope Francis, 2013, Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference promotes a special Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants on the Sunday closest to the World Refugee Day on 20 June. This year it falls on Sunday 21 June 2020, which is the twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The theme, “Where is your brother or sister?”, was taken from Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* where he speaks of his distress about the various forms of human trafficking. He quotes the book of Genesis and challenges us not to look the other way but to recognize our migrant brothers and sisters who are experiencing exploitation. Migrants and refugees are part of our community, but they may not always be seen or heard.

This theme is particularly topical given the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, as migrant communities will be among the most vulnerable to the impacts. With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting the economy worldwide, here in New Zealand, the government has been quick to offer emergency benefits to New Zealanders – however one big chunk of the workforce who are missing out are migrant workers.

In New Zealand, about one in ten of the workforce is an overseas worker on a temporary visa<sup>1</sup>. With fragile visa situations, unfamiliarity with the culture and language, and the pressure to financially provide for family back in their homeland, losing their job or their income makes them the most vulnerable for worker exploitation. Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, migrant worker exploitation had been a serious problem that even the government had acknowledged by holding a review: [www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/immigration/temporary-migrant-worker-exploitation-review](http://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/immigration/temporary-migrant-worker-exploitation-review).

Pope Francis has always seen the importance of this issue, in all its forms. In 2017, the Migrants & Refugees (M&R) Section was established by Pope Francis himself and tasked to address human trafficking as well as migrant and refugee matters. In 2018, the M&R Section held consultations with Church leaders, scholars, and organisations working in the field, to address trafficking. A resource for dioceses, parishes, and schools was put together and can be found on their website: [migrants-refugees.va](http://migrants-refugees.va).

Pope Francis acknowledges that the task of overcoming human exploitation takes “courage, patience and perseverance”, but it is a task that we all must take part in. He challenges us “to open our eyes, to see the misery of those who are completely deprived of their dignity and their freedom, and to hear their cry for help.”

<sup>1</sup> RNZ. (2020, April 30). Covid-19: Jobless immigrants face poverty, deportation, exploitation - immigration adviser. Retrieved from <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/415473/covid-19-jobless-immigrants-face-poverty-deportation-exploitation-immigration-adviser>

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### Liturgy Notes

Readings for the Day of Prayer for Refugees and Migrants, 21 June 2020

*Liturgical Year A: 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time (NRSV Catholic Edition)*

*Excerpts relevant to the theme are taken from the following passages.*

**First Reading:** Jeremiah 20:10-13

*But the Lord is with me like a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, and they will not prevail.*

*Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers.*

**Psalm:** Psalm (Gk 68) 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35

*I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother's children.*

*For the Lord hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds.*

**Second Reading:** Romans 5:12-15

*Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.*

*But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many.*

**Gospel:** Matthew 10:26-33

*For nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered...What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light. Even all the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

### Prayer of the Faithful

*Please feel free to use any or all of these, and/or write your own.*

For migrant workers, who have been exploited and their dignity disrespected. May their lives be transformed by the dignity, support and practical action that is offered to them.

**E te Ariki. Whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.**

For employers, that despite the challenges that the Covid-19 pandemic brought; may they always act in good faith toward their employees and put the dignity of the person and the work at the centre.

**E te Ariki. Whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.**

For the Church, give us strength and courage to continue to offer a place of welcome to those new to our country and to recognise your face in our brothers and sisters whom we welcome.

**E te Ariki. Whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou.**

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### Prayer for the Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

Lord God, Master of the Vineyard,  
Help us listen to the struggles of those  
who work hard to provide for their families  
but still have trouble making ends meet.

Open our eyes to the struggles of those  
exploited  
and help us speak for just wages and safe  
conditions,  
the freedom to organize, and time for renewal.  
For work was made for humankind  
and not humankind for work.

Let it not be a vehicle for exploitation  
but a radiant expression of our human dignity.

Give all who labour listening hearts  
that we may pause from our work  
to receive your gift of rest.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit  
that you might work through us to let your  
justice reign.  
Amen.

*Adapted from the United States Conference of  
Catholic Bishops.*

### A bridge for migrant workers during the COVID-19 lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought  
uncertainty across the world and Aotearoa, but  
especially to the temporary migrant workers in  
our community.

The Filipino Chaplaincy of the Archdiocese of  
Wellington quickly realised this and wanted to  
reach out and help. Outreach Ministry Head,  
Jofferson Gonzales said, "We understood that  
there would be people who won't be able to  
go to shops, or new migrants who are anxious  
and confused about the information from  
government, and may not be familiar with how  
things work in New Zealand."

"Migrant workers won't complain but it was our  
role to listen and help voice their concerns,"  
said Joey Domdom, one of the chaplaincy's  
ministry heads. "They're exploited in systems  
that are clearly taking advantage of them and  
the lockdown showed how disadvantaged they  
were."

The chaplaincy's goal is to help Filipino migrants  
become a part of the local Church community in

Aotearoa. Knowing that they would be hesitant  
to ask for help, the chaplaincy did a round of  
phone calls to temporary migrant workers that  
they knew of to ask how they were, how they  
could help, or just to be a listening ear.

They worked with Catholic Social Services to  
dispatch goods, like food and winter clothing,  
to their migrant brothers and sisters. "Our role  
was to identify these vulnerable people and  
their needs, and to become a link to other  
church agencies who had the supplies and  
were capable of doing the legwork – we sort of  
became like a bridge," Gonzales said.

When asked what our parish communities could  
do, Domdom replied with a simple suggestion -  
just start a conversation. "Just be aware of the  
migrant workers in our community. Ask them  
how they are; how is their work; how is their  
family back home?" This is precisely what Pope  
Francis was implying when he said, "Who is  
your brother or sister?"