

2020 World Day of Migrants and Refugees - For Parishes

This [World Day of Migrants and Refugees](#) (Sunday, 27 September 2020), let's remember, pray for, and commit to working to change the horrible reality of many in 'our own backyard'. We acknowledge that [parishes across the state](#) and [members of Catholic Social Services Victoria](#) are making considerable efforts to assist people seeking asylum, refugees, and other migrants who hold temporary visas. Many remain in harsh circumstances in detention centres, and the majority of the [115,000](#) refugees and asylum seekers living in the Australian community have been deemed ineligible for any federal government support payments during COVID-19, making many at risk of homelessness and despair.

Over the past couple of years, and increasingly since the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the [Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project \(BASP\)](#) has increasingly been helping with rent and utilities payments and the provision of emergency relief money. Currently BASP are assisting about 260 people with rent and more than that with other needs. Even with discounting what BASP are paying due to some donated housing, BASP are paying about \$100,000 a month to keep people with a minimum of security. Currently, asylum seekers in Melbourne are experiencing a high level of destitution and many would be homeless without the support of groups like BASP.

CatholicCares across Victoria have seen a three-times increase in the amount of people with a temporary visa seeking access to Emergency Relief over the past few months, as compared to last year. [CatholicCare Greater Melbourne, Geelong & Gippsland](#) also continues to provide other practical help to a number of asylum seeker families who receive supported housing as well as financial support for food, clothes and utility bills.

[St Vincent de Paul Society](#) is assisting people seeking asylum, migrants, refugees and international students in many different ways across the state. They are paying for rent, food, bills, education and providing support through advocacy and connection. It is not just in the cities: The Mooroopna SVDP conference in northern Victoria are supporting the rent and bills of 26 families, as COVID-19 has limited work options for many who were employed in casual and precarious work.

Pope Francis in [his message for Migrant and Refugee Sunday](#) tells us "You have to know in order to understand" and "It is necessary to be close in order to serve". He also points out to us that "It is necessary to cooperate in order to build" — only when different elements of the community work together – organisations, individuals, parishes, schools and universities work together can we effectively both advocate for systemic change and provide for people's immediate necessities.

A story from before COVID – Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project

One day recently a man (we will call him Reza) was released from Yongah Hill Immigration Detention Centre north of Perth. He had been detained for two years because he had been accused of something which proved not to be true. Then he was continued to be detained because his visa had expired. He was released with \$60 which he spent on some accommodation overnight waiting for a plane back to Melbourne.

Reza has a wife and teenage son. The Brigidine Asylum Seekers Project has been supporting this family for two years and since Reza has no work rights, they need ongoing assistance. There is no income support for families such as these – they do not qualify for Jobseeker, JobKeeper or any other Government funding.

Resources for parishes: Welcome the Asylum Seeker Parish Support Program

[Asylum Seeker Parish Support Charter and Visions Statement](#)

[Asylum Seeker Parish Support Program brochure](#)

[What parishes can do to practically support asylum seekers](#)

[Parish self-assessment](#)

[Providing accommodation assistance](#)

[Providing rental support](#)

[English language support](#)

[Hospitality support](#)

[Providing](#)

[Volunteering to help people seeking asylum](#)

[Helping Syrian refugees settle in Australia](#)

[Volunteers needed](#)

Parishes can keep up to date with news and articles related to refugees and asylum seekers, [here](#).

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