



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

BISHOPS COMMISSION FOR EVANGELISATION, LAITY AND MINISTRY

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Reflecting on a 75-year journey of faith and unity

In 1950, Catholic bishops issued *On Immigration*, a landmark pastoral letter urging the community to offer generosity to those seeking to make Australia their new home.

Seventy-five years on, Australia's Catholic bishops have issued *Under the Southern Cross: A Journey of Faith and Unity*.

Amid an unprecedented influx of migrants from southern and Eastern Europe, *On Immigration* stated: "In the inscrutable ways of Divine Providence, Australia becomes today, a sanctuary, a shelter, a home for thousands of the homeless, stateless, persecuted peoples of the old world."

The 1950 letter - read aloud in churches across the country - called on Australian Catholics to exercise their moral duty to extend kindness, practical assistance, and hospitality to new arrivals, especially those who had been displaced by war and persecution.

In the 75th anniversary letter, the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry says it is a timely opportunity to reflect on Australians' attitudes towards immigrants.

"Their words remain just as applicable to us today," the letter reads.

"Once again, our nation serves as a sanctuary and refuge for thousands seeking a new life—whether fleeing hardships in their homelands or pursuing the opportunities, freedom, and prosperity that Australia offers, and we are called again to extend the hand of welcome to migrants 'patience, kindness, sympathy and practical help ... in God's name'."

The letter notes that the lived experience of migrants – who represent about a third of Australians - has "not always been a positive one".

"Despite significant progress in fostering a multicultural society, prejudice persists among some of us who view others as being 'different' or 'other' within our nation.

“And in today’s political climate, as conflicts from abroad spill into our own nation, we are witnessing growing tensions, division, and unrest, which are threatening the harmony of our communities.

“And yet the bishops’ message from 1950 continues to echo across the decades, reminding us once again of the eternal call to welcome Jesus in welcoming the stranger. ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me’.” (Matthew 25:40)

Commission chair Archbishop Christopher Prowse said Catholics are called to “welcome, support, and embrace” those arriving from other lands.

“Migrants have made an enormous contribution to our nation,” Archbishop Prowse said.

“All of us benefit from their diverse cultural traditions, stories, deep wisdom and experience they bring.

“Australia is a more welcoming, vibrant, and flourishing society because of their contribution.”

The statement is available [here](#).