

A Million Stories: Australia Marks World Refugee Day with Faith, History and Hope

As the global community prepares to mark World Refugee Day, Australia is reflecting on a powerful milestone: one million permanent humanitarian visas granted since 1947, each representing a unique journey of resilience, survival and hope.

The Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) has joined international efforts to recognise the courage of people forced to flee their homes, while highlighting Australia's long-standing role in offering refuge and rebuilding lives.

Drawing on both history and faith, ACMRO's World Refugee Day reflection connects today refugee and people seeking asylum experiences with stories deeply rooted in scripture. Figures such as Abram and Sarai, who fled famine and later became the forebears of many nations, and Hagar, cast into the wilderness yet sustained by divine care, echo the struggles faced by displaced people today.

Similarly, the story of Moses, born into oppression and called to lead his people to freedom. And the flight of Joseph and Mary to Egypt to protect the infant Jesus, are presented as timeless examples of forced migration in search of safety and dignity.

These are not just ancient stories. They remind us that the search for refuge, safety and hope is part of the human story, and our faith calls us to honour every person and every journey.

A National Milestone

This year's observance holds particular significance in Australia. Since the aftermath of World War II, when millions were displaced across Europe, Australia answered the global call for resettlement. Beginning in 1947, the nation has since granted one million humanitarian visas, providing new beginnings for generations of refugees.

Each visa represents more than a number, it marks the rebuilding of lives, families and communities in a country far from home.

Church's Ongoing Role

The Catholic Church in Australia has played a consistent role in welcoming and supporting migrants and refugees throughout this period. Since the late 1940s, Church agencies, parishes and schools have helped new arrivals settle, integrate and thrive in their adopted communities.

This commitment has been reinforced through decades of official teaching and advocacy. Key documents include:

- [Pastoral Letter on Immigration \(1950\), issued by Australian bishops in the early post-war years](#)
- [For Those Who've Come Across the Seas, the Australian Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement \(2015–2016\)](#)
- [What the Catholic Church Teaches on Asylum and Migration, published by ACMRO](#)
- [Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the 1950 Pastoral Letter On Immigration - Under the Southern Cross: A Journey of Faith and Unity](#)

Together, these statements reflect a sustained moral call to uphold the dignity and rights of those seeking refuge.

Resources for Communities

To support the 2026 World Refugee Day observance, ACMRO has published [online resources](#) for parishes, schools and Catholic organisations. These include liturgical materials, homily notes, prayers of intercession and bulletin inserts designed to help communities engage meaningfully with the day.

The resources aim to deepen understanding, encourage reflection and inspire action in support of refugees both in Australia and globally.

A Shared Responsibility

As conflicts, climate pressures and social instability continue to displace millions worldwide, World Refugee Day serves as both a moment of remembrance and a call to action.

In marking one million humanitarian arrivals, Australia is not only commemorating its past but also renewing its commitment to compassion and hospitality.

“Every refugee carries a story,” for the Catholic Church “To recognise them is to recognise our shared humanity, and to respond with justice, dignity and hope.”