

I am heartened to see an increased focus from the Diocese on the issue of refugee assistance. Although there has been a banner (“Let’s Fully Welcome Refugees”) in place on St. Paul’s Cathedral for some time now, I have felt that there has not been much in the way of assistance for parishes in a practical sense with regard to the way in which we might assist those seeking refuge and asylum in our communities. Indeed, as you will know, our own Parish Council has recently instigate our own efforts, with the formation of a Sub-Committee of Council to formulate a practical response.

Just this week we have been notified of a Diocesan event around this very theme, and I encourage you to consider your own involvement in it. The event is called “100,000 for Refugees”, and is being held on Sunday 19th June at the Cathedral, at 3.30pm, when there will be a special ecumenical service and launch for the program.

This initiative is in response to the desire of the Diocese to positively act to help refugees to settle in and feel welcome in our community; to provide concrete assistance to enable this; and to encourage a cooperative approach in our Diocese to this social issue.

The Diocese is seeking 100,000 people in Melbourne and Geelong, (Anglican or not), to sign up, donating just \$1 each to become one of the 100,000 in our region who are standing up publicly to show support for the proper care and integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Funds raised will go toward supporting Anglicare and the Brotherhood of St Laurence’s housing and work-ready programs for refugees; English conversation classes at the Cathedral; and grants to refugee assistance programs run by parishes in the Diocese, either to strengthen existing or begin new programs.

The service will consist of: speakers; stories of existing ministries; the launch of the Parish tool kit, prepared by Parish Partnership Ministries and Archdeacon Jan Crombie; videos; children’s activity packs; music; information to help you know what one person can do, and what a congregation can do, to help.

I am hopeful that this event, coupled with the work already being done by our Sub-Committee, will help us see a way forward to helping those in our local community who are refugees to be able to integrate into society and find stability in their lives. If you are unable to attend the Cathedral on the 19th, I invite you to keep this issue in your ongoing prayers.

May Antony of Padua, Evelyn Underhill, and all the Saints walk with you this week...

Sam