

'ACCEPTING THE GIFT OF JESUS TO BE LIFE-GIVING TO MIGRANTS & REFUGEES' –  
26 AUGUST 2018 - 21<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

Our national church theme today, taken from the Message of Pope Francis is  
*"Welcoming, Protecting, Promoting and Integrating Migrants and Refugees"*  
All four aspects are important.

Pope Francis in his [Message for the 104<sup>th</sup> Day of Migrants & Refugees](#), explains what it means  
to [WELCOME](#) | [PROTECT](#) | [PROMOTE AND INTEGRATE](#)

Today's Gospel brings us to the end of five weeks  
of reflection on Chapter 6 of John's Gospel.

### JESUS IS LIFE-GIVING

Jesus offers us the gift of life forever. Jesus is **life-giving**.  
Not everyone accepts the gift in today's passage as we listen now.

### GOSPEL OF JOHN 6:60-66

*"When many of his disciples heard it, they said,  
'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?'  
But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it,  
said to them,  
**'Does this offend you?  
Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was  
before?  
It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless.  
The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.  
But among you there are some who do not believe.'***

*For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe,  
and who was the one that would betray him.*

*And he said,  
**'For this reason I have told you  
that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'***

*Because of this many of his disciples turned back  
and no longer went about with him.  
So Jesus asked the twelve,  
**'Do you also wish to go away?'***

*Simon Peter answered him,  
'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life.  
We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'"*

We note from today's Gospel passage that

- *'It is the spirit that gives life'*
- Jesus speaks to us in *'spirit and life'*
- The response of Peter to Jesus *'You have the words of eternal life'*

John tells us in 20:31 that this Gospel was written:

*"so that you may come to believe  
that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God,  
and that through believing you may have life in his name."*

- We are invited and called and gifted to *'have life in his name'*.

### SHARING LIFE – BEING A LIFE GIVER

WHETHER TO OUR FAMILY, OR NEIGHBOURS IN THE STREET,  
OR GROUPS IN OUR COUNTRY OR OVERSEAS, HOW IS OUR RESPONSE TO THEM **LIFE-GIVING?**

Jesus is **life-giving**.

Jesus is **life-giving** to us.

We are called to be **life-giving** to others.

In places of natural disasters,  
and disasters caused by people,  
and in war-torn areas of our world,  
we pray for the people suffering there.

And we also pray for those whose response is **life-giving**.

We pray for those who bring humanitarian aid to them,  
with material resources and services.

[\[Our parish prayer link to those who bring humanitarian aid\]](#)

In our parish community we have stories.

Indigenous members as share traditions  
and stories that go back before writing was ever invented.

And some share their own stories of arrival in Australia.

On this **MIGRANT & REFUGEE SUNDAY**,

We remember stories that they have shared about their journeys.

For refugees, moving or fleeing from their war-ravaged nations  
to transit countries and camps and shelters  
and waiting and hoping and surviving,  
until their arrival here.

And for some of our parish community,

Remembering stories from our parents, grandparents, great grandparents,  
and previous generations who came to Australia.

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS  
CONVERSATIONS ONE –  
THE GREAT POTATO FAMINE IN IRELAND

I shared two particular conversations with my Dad.  
My Dad had 36 jobs before finding a permanent job as a police officer.  
He would speak of the tough times on the land  
and during the Great Depression.

Yet two conversations were recounted over and over again.  
He shared stories about why his side of the family came to Australia.  
How his great grandparents had nine children in Kilkenny in Ireland.  
And how six of them died around the time of the Great Potato Famine.  
And of their desire to protect the lives of the three remaining children.  
And the lack of opportunity on a small tenant farm during the potato blight.  
And the decision not to use the local alternative  
of the “poor houses” nearby in Kilkenny City  
with its food and shelter,  
yet degrading treatment and diseases and mass graves.

(In 2017 a new Famine exhibition was opened to tell the story  
of the Kilkenny Poor - House with its records and findings and mass graves.  
The link is <https://kilkennyfamineexperience.com/>)

Dad’s Grandfather John was 10 years old  
when he arrived in Australia with surviving members of the family.  
Later brothers and sisters would be born here.

The family messages of the story -

- Always be grateful for what Australia has offered to our family
- Return the favour to new refugees and migrants now coming here.
- Respect what they might have suffered.
- Welcome them and be there for them.

CONVERSATIONS TWO –  
POST WW11 ARRIVALS

As a local suburban policeman in Brisbane, among his duties,  
Dad was required to interview newly arrived  
post Second World War refugees and immigrants.  
Dad would recount how many had learnt in their homelands  
to be suspicious of police, and that they brought this fear with them.  
Having suffered under the Nazis and Fascists and Communists and others,  
they were hoping to make a new life in Australia.  
Dad’s preference was to sit down in their kitchen  
and share a cup of tea with them.  
And prompting them by relating stories passed down to him.

Dad would share briefly with me years later  
how some of them had survived, and what kept them alive,  
And some of their faith journeys.

Again, the message was to respect them and their journeys.

In both sets of conversations with me, Dad would relate

- Never presume that you know what people have been through
- Respect for others
- The importance of faith in God.

### LIFE-GIVING

Jesus is life-giving.

We are invited by Jesus to share and to be **life-giving**.

On this **Migrant and Refugee Sunday**,  
we pray that we, as a community, are **life-giving**  
to newly arrived refugee and migrant families.

As we remember from John 13:4-5 at the Last Supper,  
Jesus set the example that we are to follow. Jesus

*“got up from the table, took off his outer robe,  
and tied a towel around himself.  
Then he poured water into a basin  
and began to wash the disciples’ feet  
and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.”*

John’s Gospel Chapters 6 (Bread of Life) and 13:1-15  
help us to understand  
our **life-giving** call and service to others  
and Eucharist at the centre of our community.

To be life-giving, includes –

**TO WELCOME, TO PROTECT, TO PROMOTE and TO INTEGRATE.**

In our celebration of Eucharist today,  
may we follow the example of Jesus.  
Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/082618.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook26082018>]

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