

Our Gospel today focuses on a situation that is familiar to all of us who have memories of growing up in a largish family. Ever again there would be the chores, and questions, discussions and arguments about whose turn it was to do the dishes, sweep the floor, set the table, clean the shower, put out the garbage, etc. and inevitably there would be the occasion when promises were made but then not carried out.

That relates, in many ways, to a project which, this week, Pope Francis asked all Catholics to participate in together with Caritas International, to get to know and befriend people who are migrants or refugees and asylum seekers, especially the more recent ones. The project is called "Sharing the Journey", and is aimed not do much at fundraising as at getting to know the stories that led to these people looking to find a home elsewhere; - getting to know the hassles and difficulties that this involved, the hardships they faced and endured, the experience of settling in Australia.

With 22 million refugees, many in camps around the world, and their number still increasing day by day, the Pope is challenging us to put aside our comfort zone for a while, and let the stories these people have to share have an influence on our lives, and so create a more responsive, responsible and supportive world in which they are welcome.

In that regard, I'd like you to watch and listen to a short clip on the screen behind me, that addresses some of the concerns which migrants and refugees bring.

As mentioned earlier, there are more than 22 million refugees stranded around the world, only a fraction of which are likely to come to Australia's shores, yet the fact is that annually we welcome some 190,000 newcomers to Australia, mostly as migrants from other parts of the Western world, and some of these we find coming to our Parish here in South Yarra; others who come as workers on temporary visas, and the remainder as refugees and asylum seekers, looking for resettlement in Australia.

We'll see very few of the latter coming to our Parish here, for many of them belong to different religions or none, but we do see them on the streets, in the shops, meet them at work and at school, and that's where as ordinary citizens Pope Francis calls us to show our interest in them, to welcome them and walk with them in their efforts to settle here, - to deal with the spectres of their past, the traumas they had to go through, the family and friends they had to leave behind, the homesickness that holds them back, the language difficulties and different social customs that they find difficult to negotiate. Some of these things I had to face 65 years ago when I came here to Australia as a 16-year old migrant, but today for many they are infinitely more complex.

In sharing this homily today our challenge once again is the response we make to the gospel, which today is particularly apt, in that we are asked to make a choice, or rather a response to the father's request: "My boy you go and work in the vineyard today."

Are we prepared to leave our comfort zone, and in getting to know the story break down the barriers towards a more human world, or are we content to leave the world as divided as between us and them as it is, and await the results?