



THE ARCHBISHOP OF BRISBANE

TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have all been deeply moved by the stories and images of the many thousands of people fleeing the violence of the Middle East and seeking refuge in Europe and elsewhere. In one sense, this is not new, but it has now reached alarming proportions; and we simply cannot look the other way, as Pope Francis has made abundantly clear.

Governments have a special responsibility in this, but so too do communities like ours. We cannot expect the government to do everything to address a crisis as large and complex as this. We have to work with governments and others as we have in the past. The Archdiocese has a history of assisting new arrivals to these shores, and that history has to continue now with new energy.

Therefore, I want to galvanise all the resources of the Archdiocese so that we can play our part in providing a safe and welcoming home for refugees who will come from the Middle East. Humanity requires it; the Gospel of Jesus Christ demands it. We have just over 100 parishes, and I would want to commit to receiving at least 100 families in the Archdiocese.

My hope is that these will be from among the neediest of the needy, whatever their religion may be. There is no doubt that the Christians are among the neediest, because they are caught in the crossfire of many battles. But, as people who know the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), we will welcome all who come to us.

Some have already enquired about making donations. We have also decided to establish the Archdiocesan Syrian Refugee Appeal to which tax-deductible donations can be made. Details can be found on the Archdiocesan website at www.brisbanecatholic.org.au.

It is unlikely that we will be receiving new arrivals before early next year. In the meantime, we will have to identify needs and work out how best to meet them. We will also have to coordinate our efforts, because a scattered approach is unlikely to be effective. We will set up an Archdiocesan register of what agencies, parishes, other communities and individuals can offer. This will enable us to act in a prompt and coordinated way when the refugees begin arriving. For the time being, I have asked Clyde Cosentino of Evangelisation Brisbane to keep an eye on all this. Clyde has the right kind of background and knowledge to help us to respond well.

There will have to be a number of elements to our response to the crisis. Certainly we will need to support families. But as the President of the Canadian Bishops Conference pointed out in a recent letter, we will also need to donate funds, to combat prejudices and fears, to get involved politically, to be informed and to pray to God that peace will come to the Middle East and all will find a home worthy of the human being.

As always in the Lord,

Archbishop of Brisbane
14 September 2015