

Reflection: Second Sunday of Lent

St Carthage's Parish: 25th February 2024

Good morning. My name is Susan Pascoe. I'm a somewhat peripatetic member of St Carthage's. It's good to see the Parish Pastoral Council has organised additional reflection to the wisdom provided by Father Joe's homilies, when we celebrate Eucharist together this Lent.

We're not all avid readers of Vatican News. Those who are will know that the Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development released a statement during the week to provide guidance on how we might prepare for the 110th year of World Migration Day. It is an opportunity to reflect on the circumstances of migrants and refugees. We do so on September 29th this year. It is a day for Catholics to remember and pray for those dislocated by conflict, persecution, and economic hardship. Given the life-threatening circumstances of people in Ukraine, Gaza and the Sudan displaced by conflict, the issue remains acutely real. And this does not take account of climate refugees, and those experiencing severe economic hardship.

If you were not in Rome in October last year, you might be unaware that the Pope asked those gathered for the Synod Assembly to join him one evening in prayer in St Peter's Square in front of the spectacular human-sized sculpture of a boatload of refugees. Care for the vulnerable, those suffering disadvantage, and those at the margins has been a recurring theme of Pope Francis'. He commissioned the massive sculpture and had it placed within the historic precinct of St Peter's Square as a permanent reminder. It will be very hard to move!

The issue of migrants is again a vexed question facing the Australian polity due to the arrival last week of a boatload of Pakistani and Bangladeshi asylum seekers near Beagle Bay, 130 km north of Broome. They arrived in blistering conditions and their circumstance could have been deadly, but for the care provided by Indigenous families in the local community. They provided food, water and showers before the police arrived to collect them. Staff from the local Aboriginal health clinic bandaged up wounds on their feet and legs. Sound familiar?

Anticipating Holy Week a little early, we recall that Christ washed the feet of his disciples on the night before he died – one of his last actions. It was an intimate, even demeaning task that provides an example to us of what it means to be fully Christian. In John's gospel (13) Christ explicitly told his disciples he'd set an example for them. 'Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them'. This message is reinforced in today's gospel of the Transfiguration where God tells those apostles on Mt Tabor, 'This is my beloved son. Listen to him'.

This message of humility and service has been passed through generations of Christians. Pope Francis seeks to reinforce the message each year by washing the feet of people such as

prisoners and those at the margins, on Holy Thursday – and by continually emphasising the need for justice, compassion, and pastoral responses to those in need.

I don't know if the people in Beagle Bay would describe themselves as Christians, but their spontaneous, compassionate and practical response to the lost asylum seekers is an example to us all. The Beagle Bay Community Chair, Henry Augustine, said to reporters, "I'm pretty stoked with our mob at Beagle Bay in terms of looking after people as human beings...It's just the human thing to do."

As we enter the third week of Lent, whether we have some self- imposed privation or not, let's aim to be aware of those in need who might benefit from Christian kindness. Thank you.