In Full Swing

The Migrants & Refugees Section of the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is now in full swing. It’s primary mission: to support the Church – locally, regionally, internationally – accompanying people at all stages of migration.

The Migrants and Refugee section has the following social media channels:
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/M_RSection
  - English
  - Italian: https://twitter.com/M_RSezione
  - Spanish: https://twitter.com/M_RSeccion
  - French: https://twitter.com/M_RSection_Fr
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/MandRSection/

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development was instituted in Pope Francis’ Motu Proprio of 17 August and began operations on 1 January 2017.

It replaces four pontifical councils: the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and the Pontifical Council for Health Care Workers.

This new multi-departmental Vatican office streamlines the Catholic church’s worldwide efforts on justice, peace, charity, healthcare and migration.

The Migrants & Refugees Section of the Dicastery is headed by two undersecretaries, Fr. Michael Czerny S.J. and Fr. Fabio Baggio C.S. but remain under the direct guidance of Pope Francis (see photo on right).

Cast into the Deep

On 19th – 20th of July 2017, the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office (ACMRO) along with the Australian Catholic University (ACU) Melbourne will be co-hosting the National Conference on Pastoral Care in a Multicultural Church and Society which will evolve around the theme ‘Cast into the Deep’ reflecting on the call by Pope Francis to go out to the peripheries of the world and cast the net.

The Conference will bring together migrant chaplains, those who work in pastoral care to our migrant communities, and the many clergy and religious who come from overseas to minister and mission in Australia.

The Conference will be an opportunity to come together to reflect as well as provide an occasion for formation and forming new connections. It is envisaged that the Conference will allow the delegates to come together to share experiences and begin to implement concrete pastoral models.

The ACMRO has recently confirmed the two keynote speakers for the conference: Cardinal Peter Turkson - Prefect of the Dicastery for the Promotion of Integral Human Development and Cardinal Orlando Quevedo - Archbishop of Cotabato, Philippines.

There has been much interest in the conference already from Australia and overseas. I would strongly encourage everyone involved or interested in ministering to migrants, refugees and multicultural communities to register for this very worthwhile conference. For more information, visit the ACMRO website on http://www.acmro.catholic.org.au/

Clyde Cosentino (CMPC Director)
New name signals changes

In December last year, Archbishop Mark Coleridge once again opened his home in Wynberg to welcome the Ethnic Ministers Group as they gathered for their Christmas Lunch (see photo below).

At this gathering, the Archbishop expressed his thoughts about changes that he would like to see in the archdiocese relating to ethnic communities and Ethnic Ministers. Among the changes, the archbishop suggested that the name ‘Migrant Chaplains and Ethnic Ministers’ be changed to ‘Community Chaplains’ representing chaplains’ ministry in their respective communities. The recent meeting of ‘Community Chaplains’ in February this year further discussed this name change.

Photo below: From left back row: Fr Epati Tamati (Samoan Chaplain), Clyde Cosentino (CMPC Director), Fr Joseph Vu SVD (Vietnamese Chaplain), Fr Davor Dominovic OFM (Croatian Chaplain), Fr Nacho Gutierrez CS (Latin American Chaplain and New Farm Parish Priest), Fr Terry Nueva (Filipino Chaplain and Acacia Ridge Parish Priest), Fr Pionius Hendi OFM Cap (Indonesian Chaplain), Francis Anei (South Sudanese Community Leader) and Fr Albert Chan MSC (Chinese Chaplain). From left front row: Percy Pamo Lawrence (CMPC Staff), Sr Rosa Vazzano FDCC (African, Burmese, Sri Lankan Communities Woodridge Pastoral Minister), Fr Stephen Kumyang (South Sudanese Chaplain), Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Sr Necitas Esguerra FDCC (retired Filipino Pastoral Associate), Sr Odete Moreira FDCC (Timor Leste Pastoral Minister), Fr Georgius Kim (Korean Chaplain) and Fr Fadi Salame (St Maroun’s Lebanese Parish Priest). Not in photo: Bishop Joseph Oudeman OFM Cap.

New Aged Care reforms for older people from CALD

At a recent meeting of Community Chaplains, guest speaker Lorella Piazetta (photo below, far left) from Anglicare’s Multicultural Program introduced and explained the government’s new aged care reform called ‘My Aged Care’.

The government-funded Anglicare Multicultural Program seeks to reach out to culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and provide information to older people (and their carers) so that they are able to understand the process of the government’s recent aged care reforms which might otherwise be too confusing for them.

All older persons in Australia must be registered with ‘My Aged Care’ in order to receive the service/s they require. Lorella hopes to visit the various ethnic communities to get the message across.
Following are some recent dot-point activities of the Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care:

**Parish Support to refugees update** (Archdiocese response to Syrian – Iraqi refugees)
Advice and discussions on resourcing parishes and deaneries: refugee support and resettlement including accommodation and financial assistance, refugee intake (parishes of Bracken Ridge, Stafford, Coorparoo and Brisbane West deanery).

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen
Bishop Long is coming to Brisbane on 22 March. He will first meet with the Sisters of St Joseph and parish social justice and refugee support groups at Banyo-Nundah Parish and later meet with recent arrivals and refugee support groups at Bracken Ridge Parish.

**Communication and social media**
Information awareness and interaction on local and global events and issues of concern through the CMPC website, newsletter and Facebook page.

**Assistance and referrals**
From October 2016 to date, the number of people assisted or referred to other service providers by CMPC is 50.

**Contact with communities**
- Fijian Catholic community – leadership set up and establishing beginnings for transparent and accountable financial best practices as per Archdiocesan policy
- Vietnamese Catholic Community – Discussion with priest re: Sacramental program (Confirmation)

**Facilitating agreements between Parish/School and Ethnic Communities**
- Indonesian Catholic Community and Dutton Park Parish and St Ita’s School
- Samoan Catholic Community and Goodna Parish
- Korean Catholic Community and Jubilee Parish

- Latin American Catholic Community and Jubilee Parish

**Concrete examples of Integration and Belonging in the archdiocese**
- Ethnic community access to archdiocesan intranet (AI) currently only accessible by parishes
- Looking at inclusion and mutual responsibilities of ethnic communities re: Archdiocese Public Liability Insurance
- Inclusion of ‘Mass and Services in Languages other than English’ in Archdiocese of Brisbane website

**Review of We are One Body**
We are one body, the framework for policy on pastoral care to migrants and refugees in the Archdiocese of Brisbane is currently being reviewed to complement current archdiocesan priorities, mission and vision.

The staff of CMPC are humbled to receive a Certificate of Recognition from the Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) as it celebrated in November last year its 40th year of service to multicultural communities. This certificate from ECCQ recognizes CMPC’s 20+ years of commitment and support to ECCQ. It also gives appreciation to CMPC’s wider efforts in making Queensland a cohesive and inclusive society. Our congratulations to ECCQ on their 40th year. We look forward to working with you in advocating for the needs and interests of Queensland’s multicultural communities for many more years. More on ECCQ on http://www.eccq.com.au/public,…/celebrating-40-years-of-eccq/
**Maronite Community**  **Three big parish events**

Three significant events spiced up the St Maroun’s parish weekend: The ordination of subdeacon John Tabet (Friday 17 February), St Maroun’s Parish annual dinner (Saturday 18 February), and the Feast of St Maroun (Sunday 19 February. Maronite Bishop of Australia Antoine-Charbel Tarabay, Toowoomba Bishop Bob McGuckin, Brisbane Bishop Joseph Oudeman and Monsignor Peter Meneely were among special guests.

We thank St Maroun’s parish priest Fr Fadi Salame for giving us permission to share these photos.

**South Sudanese Community**  **Feast of St Bakhita**

The South Sudanese Catholic Community celebrated the Feast of St Bakhita at St John Fisher Church in Tarragindi on Sunday 12 February. Mass was celebrated by Fr Ladu Yanga and Fr Mario.

St Josephine Bakhita is the patron saint of the South Sudanese Catholic Community in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Pope Francis has designated the Feast of St Josephine Bakhita, which falls on 8 February, as the world day of prayer, reflection and action against human trafficking. Photos courtesy of Francis Anei. Check out the St Bakhita Pastoral Council - Brisbane Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/St-Bakhita-Pastoral-Council-Bris.../...
Melkite Community  Youth and Young Adults Camp

Ninety participants from Brisbane, New South Wales and Victoria attended the Australian Melkite Youth and Young Adults Camp held at Kianinny Outdoor Education Centre in Tathra NSW from 16 to 20 January 2017.

Photo on right shows St Clement’s Melkite parish priest Fr Francis Elie (standing 2nd left) with two of the Youth Camp speakers, Fr Sean Byrnes, First Year Formator at Vianney College and Assistant Priest in Wagga Wagga NSW, and Stina Constantine (far right), founder of Virtue Ministry.

Photos courtesy of Fr Elie Francis and St Clement’s Melkite Parish.

Chinese Community  Seniors Group activities

The Chinese Catholic Community Brisbane’s (CCCB) Seniors Group meet once a month. Their recent gathering in February this year at the Sacred Heart Centre in Runcorn welcomed around 100 seniors who enjoyed a hearty lunch, catch up chat and tai-chi dance performances by some of the members.

On the 4th of February, the whole Chinese Catholic community in Brisbane celebrated the Chinese Lunar New Year (28 January) with a Mass followed by lunch and fellowship.

We thank CCCB President Helena Cheung for sharing these lovely photos.

Check out the community’s new website cccbrisbane.org.au. This website has Chinese (Mandarin & Cantonese) and English translations.
Latin American Community

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Latin American community celebrated the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on 11 December 2016.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge, Monsignor Peter Meneely, Jubilee Parish Priest Fr Peter Brannelly and Latin American Chaplain and New Farm Parish Priest Fr Nacho Gutierrez celebrated Mass at Holy Spirit Church in New Farm. Mass was followed by cultural performances and culinary feasts. Photos by Santiago Alcantara. Huge thanks to our contact, Nadia Ortiz Castanon and Fr Nacho.

Italian Community

129th anniversary of Scalabrinian Congregation

(The article and photo below is a reprint from the January-February issue of Rintocchi, magazine of the Catholic Italian community in Brisbane. Translated from Italian to English, the article was written by magazine Director Dino Varrichio on the occasion of the 129th anniversary of the Scalabrinian Congregation.)

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles or Scalabrinians was founded by Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza, on November 28, 1887, to assist migrants who were crossing the Atlantic to reach the Americas. The Scalabrinians currently have presence in 31 countries.

The future that opens before us, with a world in which migration of men and women is growing more and more often in dramatic conditions, puts our mission and our Congregation at the heart of the challenges that challenge the church itself.

On November 28 2016, I was invited as the National President of the Italian Catholic Federation of Australia to a special presentation by Fr Fransiskus Xaverius Yangminta CS (Assistant Parish Priest), Holy Spirit Parish, New Farm in Brisbane and administered by the Scalabrinian Fathers (Pious Society of St. Charles).

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles - Scalabrinians - is an international community of men who have as their identity and mission to be missionary religious, who follow in the footsteps of Bishop Scalabrini on behalf of the migrants.

It has been 129 years since Monsignor Scalabrini received in the basilica of San Antonio de Piacenza, from the Reverend Domenico Mantese and Giuseppe Molinari, the "solemn commitment to dedicate themselves to the new mission and to observe the provisional regulations ", this began our religious family.

The time since that day has seen a continuous alternation of moments of enthusiasm and critical situations, back to the foundational ideals and suffered events, sometimes demoralizing, of extraordinary examples of heroism by so many fellow missionaries, cloistered of historic positions as well as openings to pastoral commitments once unthinkable. We cannot forget, in the current historical context, the blossoming of vocations, especially in Asia; a phenomenon that is giving new vitality and hope to the whole Church and our Congregation, and which, precisely because of the unprecedented challenges it presents and which demands a renewed commitment from all of us, I sincerely hope that it will be a promise for our missionary field in the service to migrants.

The planted seed, almost hidden in 1887 by Blessed Scalabrini, has found "good" ground: the past, strengthened by a history built with sacrifices, options, holiness of life and feats by many Scalabrinian missionaries, constitutes the "Roots", without which our existence would be incomprehensible and destined to die. The present represents the "wings": we can still be credible signs, significant, exemplary, if in this story, we will be able to feed daily from the source. Which source? First, the "true source of Life," the Lord Jesus, without whom "nothing is possible"; Then the figure, the example, the intuitions and the soul of the Founder and his charism; and often unknown but exemplary history of co-brothers who have given their lives for the Scalabrinian ideal and finally in the same cry of the migrants.
Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I extend to you my cordial greeting, with deep appreciation for your invaluable work. I thank Archbishop Tomasi for his kind words, as well as Doctor Pöttering for his address. I am also grateful for the three testimonies which reflect in a tangible way the theme of this Forum: “Integration and Development: From Reaction to Action”. In effect, it is not possible to view the present challenges of contemporary migratory movement and of the promotion of peace, without including the twofold term “development and integration”: for this very reason I wanted to establish the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, with a Section concerned exclusively for migrants, refugees and the victims of human trafficking.

Migration, in its various forms, is not a new phenomenon in humanity’s history. It has left its mark on every age, encouraging encounter between peoples and the birth of new civilizations. In its essence, to migrate is the expression of that inherent desire for the happiness proper to every human being, a happiness that is to be sought and pursued.

The beginning of this third millennium is very much characterized by migratory movement which, in terms of origin, transit and destination, involves nearly every part of the world. Unfortunately, in the majority of cases this movement is forced, caused by conflict, natural disasters, persecution, climate change, violence, extreme poverty and inhumane living conditions: “The sheer number of people migrating from one continent to another, or shifting places within their own countries and geographical areas, is striking. Contemporary movements of migration represent the largest movement of individuals, if not of peoples, in history” (Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 5 August 2013).

Our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.

To welcome. “Rejection is an attitude we all share; it makes us see our neighbour not as a brother or sister to be accepted, but as unworthy of our attention, a rival, or someone to be bent to our will” (Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 12 January 2015). Faced with this kind of rejection, rooted ultimately in self-centredness and amplified by populist rhetoric, what is needed is a change of attitude, to overcome indifference and to counter fears with a generous approach of welcoming those who knock at our doors. For those who flee conflicts and terrible persecutions, often trapped within the grip of criminal organisations who have no scruples, we need to open accessible and secure humanitarian channels. A responsible and dignified welcome of our brothers and sisters begins by offering them decent and appropriate shelter. The enormous gathering together of persons seeking asylum and of refugees has not produced positive results. Instead these gatherings have created new situations of vulnerability and hardship. More widespread programmes of welcome, already initiated in different places, seem to favour a personal encounter and allow for greater quality of service and increased guarantees of success.
To protect. My predecessor, Pope Benedict, highlighted the fact that the migratory experience often makes people more vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and violence (cf. Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 18 October 2005). We are speaking about millions of migrant workers, male and female – and among these particularly men and women in irregular situations – of those exiled and seeking asylum, and of those who are victims of trafficking. Defending their inalienable rights, ensuring their fundamental freedoms and respecting their dignity are duties from which no one can be exempted. Protecting these brothers and sisters is a moral imperative which translates into adopting juridical instruments, both international and national, that must be clear and relevant; implementing just and far reaching political choices; prioritising constructive processes, which perhaps are slower, over immediate results of consensus; implementing timely and humane programmes in the fight against "the trafficking of human flesh" which profits others’ misfortune; coordinating the efforts of all actors, among which, you may be assured will always be the Church.

To promote. Protecting is not enough. What is required is the promotion of an integral human development of migrants, exiles and refugees. This “takes place by attending to the inestimable goods of justice, peace, and the care of creation” (Apostolic Letter Humanam Progressionem, 17 August 2016). Development, according to the social doctrine of the Church (cf. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 373-374), is an undeniable right of every human being. As such, it must be guaranteed by ensuring the necessary conditions for its exercise, both in the individual and social context, providing fair access to fundamental goods for all people and offering the possibility of choice and growth. Also here a coordinated effort is needed, one which envisages all the parties involved: from the political community to civil society, from international organisations to religious institutions. The human promotion of migrants and their families begins with their communities of origin. That is where such promotion should be guaranteed, joined to the right of being able to emigrate, as well as the right to not be constrained to emigrate (cf. Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 12 October 2012), namely the right to find in one’s own homeland the conditions necessary for living a dignified life. To this end, efforts must be encouraged that lead to the implementation of programmes of international cooperation, free from partisan interests, and programmes of transnational development which involve migrants as active protagonists.

To integrate. Integration, which is neither assimilation nor incorporation, is a two-way process, rooted essentially in the joint recognition of the other’s cultural richness: it is not the superimposing of one culture over another, nor mutual isolation, with the insidious and dangerous risk of creating ghettoes. Concerning those who arrive and who are duty bound not to close themselves off from the culture and traditions of the receiving country, respecting above all its laws, the family dimension of the process of integration must not be overlooked: for this reason I feel the need to reiterate the necessity, often presented by the Magisterium (cf. John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day, 15 August 1986), of policies directed at favouring and benefiting the reunion of families. With regard to indigenous populations, they must be supported, by helping them to be sufficiently aware of and open to processes of integration which, though not always simple and immediate, are always essential and, for the future, indispensable. This requires specific programmes, which foster significant encounters with others. Furthermore, for the Christian community, the peaceful integration of persons of various cultures is, in some way, a reflection of its catholicity, since unity, which does not nullify ethnic and cultural diversity, constitutes a part of the life of the Church, who in the Spirit of Pentecost is open to all and desires to embrace all (cf. John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day, 5 August 1987). I believe that conjugating these four verbs, in the first person singular and in the first person plural, is today a responsibility, a duty we have towards our brothers and sisters who, for various reasons, have been forced to leave their homeland: a duty of justice, of civility and of solidarity.

First of all, a duty of justice. We can no longer sustain unacceptable economic inequality, which prevents us from applying the principle of the universal destination of the earth’s goods. We are all called to undertake processes of apportionment which are respectful, responsible and inspired by the precepts of distributive justice. “We need, then, to find ways by which all may benefit from the fruits of the earth, not only to avoid the widening gap between those who have more and those who must be content with the crumbs, but above all because it is a question of justice, equality and respect for every human being” (Message for the World Day of Peace, 8 December 2013, 9). One group of individuals cannot control half of the world’s resources. We cannot allow for persons and entire peoples to have a right only to gather the remaining crumbs. Nor can we be indifferent or think ourselves dispensed from the moral imperatives which flow from a joint responsibility to care for the planet, a shared responsibility often stressed by the political international community, as also by the Magisterium (cf. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 9; 163; 189, 406). This joint responsibility must be interpreted in accord with the principle of subsidiarity, “which grants freedom to develop the capabilities present at every level of society, while also demanding a greater sense of responsibility for the common good from those who wield greater power” (Laudato Si’, 196).

Ensuring justice means also reconciling

(Continued on page 9)
Address of His Holiness (Continued from page 8) history with our present globalized situation, without perpetuating mind-sets which exploit people and places, a consequence of the most cynical use of the market in order to increase the wellbeing of the few. As Pope Benedict affirmed, the process of decolonization was delayed “both because of new forms of colonialism and continued dependence on old and new foreign powers, and because of grave irresponsibility within the very countries that have achieved independence” (Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate, 33). For all this there must be redress.

Second, there is a duty of civility. Our commitment to migrants, exiles and refugees is an application of those principles and values of welcome and fraternity that constitute a common patrimony of humanity and wisdom which we draw from. Such principles and values have been historically codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in numerous conventions and international agreements. “Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance” (ibid., 62). Today more than ever, it is necessary to affirm the centrality of the human person, without allowing immediate and ancillary circumstances, or even the necessary fulfilment of bureaucratic and administrative requirements, to obscure this essential dignity. As Saint John Paul II stated, an “irregular legal status cannot allow the migrant to lose his dignity, since he is endowed with inalienable rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored” (John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day, 25 July 1995, 2). From the duty of civility is also regained the value of fraternity, which is founded on the innate relational constitution of the human person: “A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace” (Message for the World Day of Peace, 8 December 2013, 1). Fraternity is the most civil way of relating with the reality of another person, which does not threaten us, but engages, reaffirms and enriches our individual identity (cf. Benedict XVI, Address to Participants in an Interacademic Conference on “The Changing Identity of the Individual”, 28 January 2008).

Finally, there is a duty of solidarity.

“Integration, which is neither assimilation nor incorporation, is a two-way process, rooted essentially in the joint recognition of the other’s cultural richness.”  

In the face of tragedies which take the lives of so many migrants and refugees – conflicts, persecutions, forms of abuse, violence, death – expressions of empathy and compassion cannot help but spontaneously well-up, “Where is your brother” (Gen 4:9): this question which God asks of man since his origins, involves us, especially today with regard to our brothers and sisters who are migrating: “This is not a question directed to others; it is a question directed to me, to you, to each of us” (Homily at the "Arena" Sports Camp, Salina Quarter, Lampedusa, 8 July 2013). Solidarity is born precisely from the capacity to understand the needs of our brothers and sisters who are in difficulty and to take responsibility for these needs. Upon this, in short, is based the sacred value of hospitality, present in religious traditions. For us Christians, hospitality offered to the weary traveller is offered to Jesus Christ himself, through the newcomer: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). The duty of solidarity is to counter the throwaway culture and give greater attention to those who are weakest, poorest and most vulnerable. Thus “a change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world” (Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 5 August 2013).

As I conclude these reflections, allow me to draw attention again to a particularly vulnerable group of migrants, exiles and refugees whom we are called to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate. I am speaking of the children and young people who are forced to live far from their homeland and who are separated from their loved ones. I dedicated my most recent Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees to them, highlighting how “we need to work towards protection, integration and long-term solutions” (Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 8 September 2016).

I trust that these two days will bear an abundant fruit of good works. I assure you of my prayers; and, please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Feast / Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>The Three Holy Hierarchs (St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. John Chrysostom)</td>
<td>30 Jan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Croatian</td>
<td>Saint Blaise/Sv Vlaho (Dubrovnik)</td>
<td>3 Feb</td>
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<td>South Sudanese</td>
<td>Saint Josephine Bakhita</td>
<td>8 Feb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maronite</td>
<td>Saint Maroun</td>
<td>9 Feb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>San Giuseppe (Saint Joseph’s Day)</td>
<td>19 Mar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melkite</td>
<td>Holy and Glorious Pascha - Fesakh - Hajmeh (on the 1st ecclesiastical full moon on or after March 21)</td>
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<td>Maronite</td>
<td>Saint Rafqa</td>
<td>23 Mar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>San Pedro Calungsod</td>
<td>2 Apr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Three Saints – Alfio, Filadelfo &amp; Cirino</td>
<td>May (1st Sunday)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Giovanni Battista Scalabrini (Father to the Migrants)</td>
<td>1 Jun</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Saint Thomas, Apostle of India</td>
<td>3 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>Our Lady of Chiquinquirá (patroness)</td>
<td>6 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>The 120 Martyrs of China</td>
<td>9 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chilean</td>
<td>Santa Teresa de los Andes</td>
<td>13 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paraguayan</td>
<td>Our Lady of Caacupe (patroness)</td>
<td>13 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maronite</td>
<td>Saint Charbel</td>
<td>July, 3rd Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Saint Alphonsa (first saint from India)</td>
<td>28 Jul</td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvadoran</td>
<td>The Divine Saviour of the World and Our Lady of Peace (patrons)</td>
<td>3 Aug</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chilean</td>
<td>San Alberto Hurtado</td>
<td>18 August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peruvian</td>
<td>Saint Rose of Lima (patroness)</td>
<td>24 Aug</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>Our Lady of Czestochowa</td>
<td>26 Aug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>Feast Day of Mother Teresa</td>
<td>5 Sep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuelan</td>
<td>Our Lady of Coromoto (patroness)</td>
<td>7 Sep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Our Lady of Vailankanni</td>
<td>8 Sep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>Eid Al-Salib or the Feast of Holy Cross</td>
<td>13 Sep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>Saint Andrew Kim and Korean Martyrs</td>
<td>20 Sep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>Padre Pio of Pietrelcina</td>
<td>23 Sep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>San Lorenzo Ruiz</td>
<td>27 Sep</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
<td>Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary</td>
<td>1 Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guatemalan</td>
<td>Our Lady of the Rosary (patroness)</td>
<td>5 Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazilian</td>
<td>Our Lady of Aparecida</td>
<td>12 Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>Saint Laura Montoya y Upegui</td>
<td>21 Oct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peruvian</td>
<td>The Lord of Miracles (patron)</td>
<td>26 Oct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uruguayan</td>
<td>Our Lady of 33 Orientals (patroness)</td>
<td>9 Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>Martyrs of Vietnam</td>
<td>24 Nov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congolese</td>
<td>Blessed Anuarite Nengapata Clementina</td>
<td>1 Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanian</td>
<td>Shen‘Kolli l Dimnit (Saint Nicholas of Winter)</td>
<td>6 Dec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>Our Lady of Guadalupe (patroness - Catholic Chapel)</td>
<td>12 Dec</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mexican</td>
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When I used to complain to my mother about how hard my job is at times, she just tells me to be thankful that I have a job. Such sound advice coming from a woman who struggled to make ends meet and who worried about her children and family. In her frail age of 86, my recently widowed mother is forever grateful for the gift of being able to find work overseas. Meanwhile, I, the child she left behind, saw her leaving as tragic — because I lost a mother. I remember clearly how much I missed my mother that night when we came back from the airport. I remember a yellow mosquito net; I remember crying and sobbing until I fell asleep; I remember crying many nights after that. I’ve always seen myself as a victim of migration, whereas my mother always sees herself as a grateful recipient of a gift, the gift of working in London. The child in me saw the tragedy of this migration story, the ‘unfair’ version of the story. The mother in her saw trust in God, resilience, charity, gratefulness and hope.

When God seems unfair, perhaps it is us who are actually being unfair to God — blaming God for the injustice done to us, when in fact it is us and our humankind who are acting unjustly towards each other. We promote injustice simply by our ‘comfortable and silent complicity’ (Pope Francis on human trafficking, Evangelii Gaudium #211)

In The Parable of the Vineyard, Jesus asks us to be generous and to think not only of ourselves and what we think we deserve. The big words are charity, compassion, gratitude and complete trust in God.

My gratitude goes to the churches and organisations of various faiths and denominations that set up projects that promote self-sufficient communities in the Philippines, assisting the most vulnerable acquire skills that would protect them from becoming prey to unscrupulous individuals and organized crime.

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My gratitude goes to the churches and organisations of various faiths and denominations that set up projects that promote self-sufficient communities in the Philippines, assisting the most vulnerable acquire skills that would protect them from becoming prey to unscrupulous individuals and organized crime. It is my hope that one day, no mother would ever be forced to leave her young children to work overseas just to put food on the table.

– Percy Pamo Lawrence (CMPC Staff)
It took me a while to gather my thoughts on the theme of this year’s World Day of Prayer -- ‘Am I Being Unfair to You?’ from Matthew 20:1-16, the Parable of the Vineyard. I had looked at some of the resources available on the World Day of Prayer website and found reflections on life situations that I have not experienced first hand. I am not familiar with Filipino agricultural and farming practices and the injustices in the rural areas. I grew up in an urban slum setting juxtaposed with snobbish university and work atmosphere. I grew up at a time and in an environment where, sadly, most young person’s goal was to ‘go overseas’.

In an attempt to make sense of the theme, my reflection today hopes to make a connection between Jesus’ message of charity, compassion, gratitude and complete trust in God through the eyes of Filipino migrant workers as they wade through life’s struggles and triumphs in another country.

On a more personal level, I would like to share with you the story of a migrant worker – my mother – and the family she left behind. In sharing my family’s story, I also share the stories of many Filipino families who are caught up in this culture of migration that has prevailed in the Philippines in the last four decades.

Driven by ‘want of a better life’ and somehow inspired by a sense of adventure, my parents in the early 50s migrated from the rural areas to the urban city of Manila. They met and married in the 60s and started a family. But life did not become a ‘happily ever after’ story. Like many others at the time, they were left wondering why the harder they work, the deeper they seem to sink into poverty. Their honest simplicity could not comprehend the government corruption and corporate greed that was beginning to rear its ugly head at the time. Things got quite bad that my family ended up living in a slum area in Quezon City. I was unaware we were living in the slums because I was just a child then who enjoyed playing in the rain and watching paper boats get swallowed up in the floods. Life in the slums for me, as a child, wasn’t that bad at all. But my mother felt something had to be done.

In 1977, my mother left the Philippines to work as a domestic helper in London. She left behind three children — my cousin and I were just 11 years old and my sister was 14. My mother (Continued on page 11)