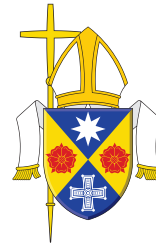




CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF SANDHURST



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF SALE

Wednesday 25 August 2021

Members of the Catholic community in Victoria,
The Catholic Dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale,

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We hold the people of Afghanistan in our prayers, and express a commitment to compassionate outreach for them throughout the world and here in Victoria.

In Victoria, we have the largest number of Afghan-born people in Australia and have two 'world famous' places deeply enriched by Afghan culture: Dandenong and Shepparton. Afghans hold an important place in the hearts of Victorians, especially at this difficult time.

We recognise the pain of family separation, and are deeply concerned for those who are living in safety in Australia while their homeland experiences such rapid and devastating changes. We know there is deep concern from the Afghan community in Victoria for their family members and friends who remain in Afghanistan. We join with them in this concern.

While we recognise the limitations of the role that Australia can play in the context of this international crisis, and the complexity of the situation, we affirm that a just and compassionate response should guide our Government's decision making.

Our country's involvement in the conflict should urge a just and compassionate response to the current situation now, and our policies should be person-focused, and adapt to the fundamentally changed situation.

Families being able to be together safely should be a priority at this time.

We hold particularly in our prayers the 5,100 Afghan refugees in the Australian community who are separated from family and loved ones because of the danger related to their own personal situations that required them to leave their homes and families, and by the continuing Australian Government policy that precludes them from applying for humanitarian visas for their immediate family members to join them in safety in Australia.

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We ask that compassion and justice be the guide of Australian Government decisions going forward, as together Catholic organisations, hospitals, parishes, schools and communities across Victoria continue to support those in the Afghan community through this difficult time.

We commit to pray for and welcome all new arrivals from Afghanistan during the coming months, as we remember how the Holy Family received welcome in Egypt when they sought safety.

Yours sincerely in Christ Jesus,

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Most Rev Terence Curtin
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Most Rev Martin Ashe
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Most Rev Anthony Ireland
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Most Rev Paul Bird CSsR
BISHOP OF BALLARAT

Most Rev Shane Mackinlay
BISHOP OF SANDHURST

Most Rev Gregory Bennet
BISHOP OF SALE

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