



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

## World Day for Migrants and Refugees

### *Bishop Patrick Lynch's Homily*

FEAST OF SANTO NIÑO, ST GEORGE'S CATHEDRAL, SOUTHWARK, 18 JANUARY 2015

**There are two groups of very vulnerable people that Our Holy Father is especially concerned about: children and the victims of human trafficking. In our Gospel St. Matthew invites us to reflect on the gift that children are for the family, for the Church and for society. Matthew describes the scene where the apostles are arguing among themselves as to which of them is the greatest. Jesus, however, takes this opportunity to teach them a lesson about the dignity and importance of children. The apostles are completely absorbed in themselves so Jesus reminds them that being a true disciple means being aware of others and caring for others especially the most vulnerable and in particular children.**

The Feast of Santo Nino reminds us that Jesus too was a child and calls us to care for all children as if one was caring for the child Jesus. Today, on the Feast of Santo Nino, we pray especially for the children of migrants and refugees throughout the world. We pray for families – parents and children – especially in Syria, Southern Sudan and throughout the world who are forced to leave their homes and their country because of violence, war or persecution. I appeal again to Her Majesty's Government who have responded financially to the plight of the two million refugees from the civil war in Syria to renew it's efforts to bring about a peaceful solution in Syria but also in conjunction with other European Governments to find a way in which countries within the E.U. can receive at least some of these refugees especially unaccompanied children. We also pray for children and their parents who leave their homeland because of extreme poverty in the hope of a better future and for the children whose family homes have been devastated by the recent typhoon which struck the Philippines with devastating consequences just two months ago.

The second group that Our Holy Father is very concerned about is those who are caught up in situations of slavery. In his recent Apostolic Exhortation – *Evangelii Gaudium* – Pope Francis, in forceful language asks “Where is your brother and sister who is enslaved?... Let us not look the other way”. We could not get stronger leadership as to why we should be convinced of the importance of working together to combat human trafficking. It is my experience, however, that in some places and in some communities there is still a lack of awareness about the reality of modern day slavery and a lack of awareness of the practical help that is available especially to victims. It is important, therefore, to realise that each of us can make a difference. If you become aware or suspicious that someone is being held in a situation of slavery do have the confidence to ring the national helpline number. They will listen carefully and compassionately and advise wisely as to what you should do. We are also delighted that Mr. Kevin Hyland the new Anti-Slavery Commissioner has joined us for mass today. I know he especially wants to help and be at the service of the Filipino community. At the back of the Cathedral you will find a pamphlet giving contact details of the helpline and the commissioner. Feel free to take a pamphlet and do have the confidence to use the numbers if necessary – it could help or even save a life.

Today as we celebrate the Feast of Santo Nino and the World Day for Migrants and Refugees we give thanks for the wonderful contribution that Filipino migrants and indeed migrants from many

other countries have made to our parishes and schools, our hospitals and care homes, our local communities and indeed the country and we take to heart the concluding words of Pope Francis' message for today "you have a special place in the heart of the Church, and you help her to enlarge her heart and manifest her motherhood towards the entire human family. Think of the Holy Family during the flight to Egypt. Just as Mary and Joseph kept alive the confidence that God would never abandon them, so in you may the same hope never be wanting. I entrust you to their protection and I cordially impart to all of you my Apostolic Blessing".

## **Right Reverend Patrick Lynch**

*Bishop for Migrants*