

Information for Churches re Justice for Refugees on Palm Sunday 2023

Justice for Refugees

This Information Kit for Churches includes:

- Context – why Palm Sunday is an important day to call for justice for refugees
- How your church can help to promote Palm Sunday activities
- Display a Justice for Refugees BANNER – see order form below
- Ideas for sermons and prayers for Palm Sunday
- Further background information on current refugee issues

In Melbourne, the Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees 2023 in Melbourne/Naaarm is endorsed by many faith based and other community groups. The speakers program at the State Library in the CBD will include refugees and faith speakers. Music from 1.30pm, Speakers from 2pm, around 2.45pm Walk through the city to Parliament Gardens where there will be closing speakers and music until around 4pm. Further updates will be made on the Facebook page: <https://bit.ly/3wFyQUW>



All faith leaders are encouraged to attend the Walk, and join the Walk Leaders behind the banner. **Please advise Sandy Boyce if you are able to attend on the day.**

Congregations might like to include a focus on refugees in their services, and also encourage members and groups to be involved in the Palm Sunday Walk. A selection of prayers for refugees that may be adapted for use in congregations – see link below.

[Poster for Melbourne Palm Sunday Walk for Justice](#)

[Leaflet - Palm Sunday Walk for Justice 2023.pdf](#)

If you would like printed leaflets and posters for your parishioners, please email Marie at info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au with your name, address for delivery, and number of leaflets and posters (A4 & A3) required - we have plenty on hand, so be bold !

See further information below.

WHY FAITH COMMUNITIES CALL FOR JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES ON PALM SUNDAY

The call to show loving kindness and care for our neighbours, to welcome the stranger, and to uphold the worth and dignity of each person, is central to our Christian beliefs and practices. At the same time, advocacy may be needed as part of our response to the lived experience of the vulnerable and marginalised. It may also require a challenge to unjust

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systems that perpetuate inequity and disadvantage. Christians may contribute to respectful public dialogue with policy makers so that constructive change can happen.

Palm Sunday each year is an occasion to bear witness to the priority of compassion and to call for justice for refugees and asylum seekers. It is also a time to celebrate the contribution that so many refugees have made to Australian society in a wide range of endeavours. It is a time to stand together.

Across Australia, in capitals cities and in local communities, there will be actions calling for Justice for Refugees, and Permanent Protection for ALL Refugees who are here in Australia. For information about where local actions will be held, and other more general information about Palm Sunday, including a leaflet and poster – go to <https://aran.net.au/palm-sunday-2023/>

HOW YOUR CHURCH HELP TO PROMOTE PALM SUNDAY ACTIVITIES

- Include information about the Walk in your Easter service signage:
 - Palm Sunday Walk for Justice for Refugees, 2 April, State Library, 2pm.
 - For churches not in Melbourne: Stand for Justice for Refugees on Palm Sunday
- Make sure the poster and leaflet is displayed and available in your church
- Consider ordering a **Justice for Refugees** banner for display outside your church (Possibly on a permanent basis) – see below details for ordering a banner from the Refugee Advocacy Network
- Make mention of the need for Justice for Refugees in your services on Palm Sunday
- Encourage your members to attend the Melbourne Walk for Justice, or an action in their local area if there is one – see <https://aran.net.au/palm-sunday-2023/#listingevents>
- For those who are unable to attend events on the day, there will be an online action they can take – see <https://aran.net.au/palm-sunday-2023/#faithcomm> to be posted by 20 March.

IDEAS FOR SERMONS AND SERVICES ON PALM SUNDAY

Prayer/s

Prayer by the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne: <https://aran.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Palm-Sunday-Prayer.pdf>

Commongrace Prayers: https://www.commongrace.org.au/asylum_pray

Link to video clip - Rev. Dr. Katherine Rainger, Holy Covenant Anglican Church (Canberra) calling on people to attend the Palm Sunday rallies for Justice for Refugees in whichever town or city they live. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S4lyyqjwnOw>

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Notes for Sermons

The Gospel stories of the entry of Jesus to Jerusalem on a donkey, on what we now call Palm Sunday, is well known. The crowds shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!' (cf Psalm 118:25-26). The crowds recognised the event as fulfilment of ancient prophesy (Zechariah 9.9). "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey". This king would be the non-violent king, a king of peace: "He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations" (9.10).

Thus it was, that Jesus chose to ride "the most unthreatening, most un-military mount imaginable: a female nursing donkey with her little colt trotting along beside her" (John Dominic Crossan). In their compelling book, *The Last Week: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Last Days in Jerusalem*, Crossan and Borg argue that two processions entered Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday. Every year, the Roman governor of occupied Judea would ride up to Jerusalem from his coastal residence in the west, specifically to be present in the city for Passover - the annual Jewish festival that swelled Jerusalem's population from its usual 50,000 to at least 200,000. It was a politically volatile time, with the risk of riots as the Jewish people recalled Passover and the ancient victory over Egypt, and fanned the flames of hope for their liberation from Roman occupation. Pilate brought with him soldiers and cavalry to reinforce the imperial garrison in Jerusalem. It made an impressive military procession, designed to intimidate the Jewish people and remind them Rome was in charge, and watching.

The entry of Jesus into Jerusalem was a carefully staged counter-procession to the pomp and power of the Roman empire. Each proclaimed two very different and contrasting visions of how this world can and should be: the kingdom of God versus the kingdoms and the powers of this world. The former is about justice and the end of violence. The latter is about domination and exploitation.

The Palm Sunday Walk for Refugees is a contemporary procession through city streets. Some people will hold signs and banners, some will sing songs, some will call out for compassion and justice. Some onlookers may pause to look for a moment as the procession passes by, and then go about their day. Some will wonder what a group of Christians and concerned citizens can do to change Government policies and practices and put an end to the profiteering of private companies managing offshore facilities that detain vulnerable, traumatised people. Yet those who join the Palm Sunday 'procession' remain committed to seeking compassionate and just ways to respond to refugees and asylum seekers.

As we reflect on the plight of refugees, forced to flee their homes and, for many, their homeland, we can see the terrible consequence of war and conflict, and military might. Let us again turn our attention to the way of Jesus, Prince of Peace, and to justice and the end of violence. Let us follow the example of Jesus in offering compassionate care to the most vulnerable in our global village.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION on REFUGEE ISSUES

Justice for Refugees means:

- > Permanent visas and family reunion for all refugees
- > Fair and timely assessment of all claims for refugee status
- > Health care, work rights, income support, and access to education for all those seeking asylum
- > Releasing ALL refugees from detention
- > Offering resettlement here for refugees still in PNG, on Nauru, and in Indonesia
- > Ending offshore processing and detention
- > Increasing the humanitarian intake of refugees

Update on recent announcement regarding permanent visas:

We welcome the news, that around 19,000 refugees who have been in limbo for 10 years on temporary TPVs and SHEV visas will now be able to apply for permanent visas and will also be able to apply for family reunion. These refugees have been separated from loved ones for many years, and family reunification is an essential element of the resettlement process.

However, there are around 12,000 people who are having their claims for refugee status processed under the flawed so-called 'Fast Track System'. After 10 years most these people are still waiting for their status to be decided, and many have been unfairly refused. There is no doubt that many of these people are owed protection as refugees - they need natural justice and a rapid pathway to permanency. The announcement by the government on 13 February has no effect for these people, they remain in limbo.

Display a Justice for Refugees BANNER

Orders and payment need to be received by 8th March



Justice for Refugees

The banner will be 2m wide and 70cm deep – with ropes and eyelets for easy hanging or carrying.

Refugee Advocacy Network will place a bulk order for vinyl **Justice for Refugees** banners for use by local groups, local churches, schools etc.

In addition to your own group, please think about whether there are churches or other groups in your community which would use a banner.

We need to know how many banners to order by 8 March – so you must let us know by then.

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To order a banner send the following information to

info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au

Please use the **Subject line: Order for banner**

Name of your group/church/organisation

Name of contact person

Email for contact person

Mobile for contact person

Number of banners required

Delivery Address

Payment by direct deposit to Refugee Advocacy Network (RAN) Bendigo Bank: BSB: 633 000 Account No: 140311184 Reference= Name of your group

Option 1 – Prepayment: I have made a payment of \$50 to the RAN account **Yes/No**

Option 2– Payment on delivery: I will make a payment of \$50 to the RAN account once the banner is received **Yes/No**

*Please indicate clearly which payment option is relevant **Note: pre-payment is much preferred!***

Send this order form with all requested details to Marie

at info@refugeeadvocacynetwork.org.au by 8th March 2023 to secure your order.