

Tragically, there are now more people seeking resettlement than there were at the end of the Second World War. By the end of 2015, 65.3 million people worldwide had been forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict, persecution, violence and human rights violations.

This is a massive world-wide problem and it requires a world-wide solution. Unfortunately, Australia's political debates have not focused on the millions of people displaced around the world but almost exclusively on its own borders.

In order to stop the disorderly arrival of refugees in Australia we now refuse anybody who arrives by boat on our shores the privilege ever to settle here. We have locked them up in indefinite detention in offshore camps – a policy which we all know has caused serious mental and physical damage to those incarcerated, especially children.

Our political leaders say, "well that is sad but it is justified - it is the price we have to pay to stop the boats." The problem is one, that it is not us but the poorest and most desperate people on earth who are paying the price and two, that we haven't stopped the boats or the need for people to find safe haven. We've only stopped the flow to Australia. There are still millions of people who are genuinely seeking protection and if every country did what Australia is doing then no refugee would be able to flee from persecution anywhere.

In Australia, our political leaders have created a climate, through narrow-minded rhetoric, that plays to people's fears and prejudices and that increasingly de-humanises those who are seeking asylum on our shores by attaching labels to them and raising suspicions about their motivations; at times implying terrorist agendas or using terms such as illegals, queue jumpers, economic refugees. This all makes it easier for us to say of the asylum seeker that he or she is certainly not one of us.

In the story of salvation when God saw the terrible plight and suffering of his people in Egypt in slavery, he sends Moses to lead them out of that place of oppression to the promised land. Moses is not a people smuggler; he is God's liberator.

The problem of refugees and displaced people is huge and it is complex - there are no easy answers. But the first place to start finding a solution is to approach the issue with hearts full of compassion and love. Let us pray today for such a change of heart to those who govern and lead our communities.

Joe Caddy