



HANDBOOKS

8d

PRESENCE AND MISSION OF THE SCALABRINIANS IN AUSTRALIA AND ASIA



PRESENCE AND MISSION OF THE SCALABRINIANS IN AUSTRALIA AND ASIA

Delmar Silva, cs

SCALABRINI INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION INSTITUTE

Roma, 2020

METHODOLOGY

1. **Invocation** (prayer or song)

2. **Structure of educational kit 8d:**

- The beginnings
- The Province in the 1960s and 1970s
- The developments of the 1980s
- In the 1990s
- In the years 2000
- Current scenario
- Looking into the future

3. **Development of the conversation**

The kit can be utilized in one or more than one session, particularly if attention is given to separate continents or countries. It might be useful to hear from Scalabrinian missionaries who were involved in a specific area or apostolate.

4. **The final sharing** can emerge from questions such as:

- What aspects of the Scalabrinian mission in Australia and Asia do you consider more relevant?
- What is particularly lacking in the Scalabrinian mission in Australia and Asia?
- What perspectives for the lay involvement are opening in Australia and Asia?

5. **Deepening**

In addition to videos and reading material, watching of some movies can be helpful. A choice of movies is indicated in the Education Kit 0.

6. **Evaluation**

Please fill up the short form that was distributed.

7. **Conclusion** with a prayer or a song

THE BEGINNINGS

Following the rapid surge of Italian migrations to Australia after World War Two (1939-1945), Pope Pius XII, on the 30th of July 1949, authorized the Scalabrinians to open missions in Australia for Italian migrants. After lengthy consultations between the Scalabrinians, the Papal Nuncio in Australia and the Australian Bishops, the Scalabrinians were received by the bishop of the diocese of Cairns in North Queensland and the bishop of the diocese of Wollongong in New South Wales. The first four Scalabrinians arrived in Australia on November 2, 1952. The parish at Silkwood, in Queensland, began with Fr Dante Orsi and Fr Ignatius Militello, and the parish at Unanderra, in New South Wales, with Fr Francesco Prevedello and Br. Nino Setti. The missions were dependent on the provinces of North America.

The Church in Australia never adopted the models for the pastoral care of migrants suggested by the *Exsul Familia*, i.e. the personal parish or the mission with care of souls. Migrants were invited to become part of the territorial parish. Eventually, the chaplain for migrants was the preferred pastoral model. Consequently, the Scalabrinians began and developed their mission mostly through territorial parishes, which were used as basis to reach out to migrants in other parishes.

As the parish of Unanderra had a very small number of migrants, while many Italians were in the nearby industrial city of Wollongong, a center was established there in 1955, with the purpose of offering not only religious services, but also social assistance. As more bishops became interested in having Scalabrinians in their dioceses, and new missionaries were assigned to Australia, several new missions were opened in the 1950s, like the ones in Hobart, Tasmania, Carrington and Hamilton in Newcastle, Surry Hills in Sydney, Lismore in New South Wales, Walkerston in Queensland and Fitzroy in Melbourne.

In a few years there were already eight missions and 17 priests in Australia. Therefore, the missions cut their ties from the North American Provinces and became a *Missio sui juris* in 1957. The successful experience of the center in Wollongong was replicated in other places. The Italian migrants found in the centers a place to convene but also to receive social assistance and to attend language classes.

THE PROVINCE IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

With ten parishes, three centers and 22 missionaries the province of St Francis X. Cabrini was established in 1962. As the province continued to expand with new parishes, the reaching out approach also continued, particularly through temporary missions. To give an idea of the work involved, 53 missions were given in 1965: 28 in the state of Victoria, 15 in New South Wales, eight in Queensland, five in South Australia, one in Tasmania, three in the Northern Territories and three in New Zealand. More than 9,000 families were visited, and more than 13,000 people attended the missions.

A very important initiative that originated in 1960 was the establishment of the *Italian Catholic Federation (ICF)*, a lay organization made up of Italians who were attending the parishes staffed by the Scalabrinians or were in touch with

the work of the Scalabrinians. The purpose of the organization was to live the values of the gospel as typical of the Catholic Action groups throughout the world, translated concretely in social and cultural initiatives for the Italian migrants and in concrete support to the various programs of the Scalabrinian missionaries. The ICF developed into more than 20 sections throughout Australia and held biannual national congresses. With the generational transition, a youth branch was established to involve the children of migrants. However, it was not very successful, as the youngsters born in Australia did not feel a strong attachment to ethnic ties. The issue of continuity and survival as an organization was often debated. Regardless, after 60 years, the ICF is still operational and effective, undoubtedly the longest functioning lay group in the Scalabrinian world.

As the mission in Australia continued expanding, the first parishes of Unanderra and Silkwood were returned to the respective dioceses. The one of Unanderra because of the small number of migrants and the one in Silkwood because of its distance from the other parishes. The presence in Tasmania was also closed as new migrants were not arriving and the ones present there were progressively integrating in the local Church.

In 1974 the first Scalabrinian Village was inaugurated at Austral, in New South Wales. Called villages because of the intention to rebuild for the aging community of Italians the atmosphere of their native towns, they represent the best combination between the vision and leadership of the Scalabrinians, in particular of Fr Nevio Capra, and the cooperation of the Italian community. Although organized as an independent corporation, the Villages carry the attention to the most vulnerable migrants, in the Scalabrinian tradition. Five of them are in the Sydney area, one in Griffith and one in Melbourne.

THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE 1980s

Three factors were behind the developments that took place in the 1980s. First, the ecclesiology that originated from Vatican II emphasized the responsibility of bishops for the care of migrants. Then, the ending of the White Australia policy in 1973 transformed rapidly the immigration scenario in Australia. The flow of migrants from Italy, and also from Europe, except for the UK, dwindled, while more migrants arrived from Latin America and most of all from Asia. Finally, the expansion of the charism of the congregation to all migrants invited the missionaries to look into the possibility to minister also to non-Italian migrants.

In Australia

In Australia, attention to migrants from Latin America began by sending first some missionaries to learn the language and then adding chaplaincies for Latino migrants in the various parishes. Already the Scalabrinian parishes were catering to a multicultural community. In fact, Australia had embraced multiculturalism as a political philosophy and the Church followed suit. With the addition of the Latino apostolate, the intercultural character of the parishes became a challenge but also an expression of the catholicity of the Church.

A center for migration studies was opened in Sydney to engage with the local society in the discussion on migration. The center published a quarterly mag-

azine, *Migration Monitor*, hosted a specialized library and was influential with the local Church in the discussion on the pastoral care of migrants.

The opening in Asia

The changes in migration policy that took place in the 1960s and early 1970s in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand took away the restrictions to migration from Asia that had been in place for many years. Consequently, Asia became a main source of migrants for those territories. In addition, developments in the Gulf countries began attracting a large number of migrants, particularly from South and Southeast Asia. Migration was soon a major social and political issue in Asia and the care of migrants a preoccupation for the local Church. Such preoccupation was particularly felt in the Philippines, the only major country with a catholic population majority.

The opportunity of moving out of Australia and becoming involved with migrants in Asia was ventilated in a provincial assembly at the end of the 1970s and the provincial superior, Fr Domenico Ceresoli, brought it to the General Chapter of 1980. The idea was further pursued and in September 1982 Fr Antonio Paganoni landed in Manila, soon joined by Fr Luigi Sabbadin and John Iacono. The reasons for a Scalabrinian presence in the Philippines were to become involved with the care of Filipino migrants, and to establish a vocation program.

On the pastoral side, the choice was made to concentrate on initiatives which were specific to our charism. The direction of the Apostleship of the Sea (AOS) in the port of Manila and of the secretariat of the Episcopal Commission on Migrants and Itinerant People (ECMI) were accepted in 1984. The AOS is particularly significant because of the large number of Filipinos working as seafarers. About 20 percent of all seafarers in the world are Filipino and many undertake the specific studies for this career in the Philippines, actually more than can find employment. Although formally protected by international laws, seafarers are often victims of unscrupulous recruiters and employers. The secretariat of the ECMI is also a significant position because of the possibility to increase the sensitivity of the local Church on migrants and itinerant people and helping the work of many Filipino chaplains working for migrants in the world.

On the formation side, the first vocations were welcomed in 1984 and the Scalabrini Formation Center in Quezon City was blessed by Card. Sin in 1985. The first novices were sent to Italy for their novitiate, while in 1989 the Scalabrini Theological House of Studies was inaugurated, welcoming non Filipino religious assigned to Manila for their theological studies.

In 1987, on the centenary of the foundation of the Congregation, Fr Paganoni started the Scalabrini Migration Center, a study center to dialogue with the academic and social community through publications, research and a magazine, *Asian Migrant*.

IN THE 1990s

New missions in Asia

Migration in Asia did not just go towards the traditional immigration countries and to the Gulf region. The so-called "tiger economies" of Singapore, Hong

Kong, Taiwan and South Korea also began hosting an increasing number of migrants. In addition, Malaysia and Thailand became the destination of many migrants from the neighboring nations. Like the one to the Gulf region, this migration was mostly of single, temporary workers, who could not establish their residence in the place of work and had to keep renewing their contracts. Mediated by recruiters and brokers, their living and working conditions were rather miserable. It was unavoidable that the opening in the Philippines became an opening to missions in Asia.

Some initiatives were not given continuity, like the presence in the Indian ocean island of Diego Garcia, where Fr Michele Cagna was sent for three years to be a chaplain for the Filipinos working on the American airbase hosted there. Others found further development later on, like the initiative of Fr Bruno Ciceri, who started a program for refugees ("Samathana House") in Makati, offering temporary shelter, legal assistance and English language classes. The idea developed later into a welcome house to accommodate Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), seafarers and refugees. It was the beginning of the Scalabrini Center for People on the Move (SCPM).

Outside of the Philippines, an attempt was made to have a mission in Singapore, but it could not materialize. Instead a pastoral presence started in 1994 in Taiwan, with Fr Edwin Corros and Fr Michele Cagna as the first missionaries, assigned to learn first the Mandarin language. The opening in Taiwan developed in 1996 with the Stella Maris Center in Kaohsiung to assist the seafarers but also the migrants in the diocese. It was previously handled by the PIME fathers. The following year, in 1997, the diocese of Taipei entrusted to the Scalabrinians the parish of St. Christopher. Traditionally the parish for the English-speaking people, it was the point of reference for the many Filipino migrants in Taipei and it remains the largest place of gathering for them.

In the Philippines, the Scalabrini Migration Center became the point of reference for a group of NGOs, coalesced under the name of Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (PMRW). In addition to the launching of the scholarly quarterly *Asian Pacific Migration Journal* (APMJ) and holding various international conferences, SMC was also instrumental for the launching on December 18, 1997, of what became the International migrants' day. In 2001 it started the program Exodus, a week of pastoral reflections for religious and lay people involved with the care of migrants in Asia.

The celebration of the great jubilee of 2000 was the occasion for the province to provide a new place for the Scalabrini Center for People on the Move. Fr Paulo Prigol, also the secretary of ECMI, oversaw the building and the running of the new complex, which keeps providing a place for the many OFWs in preparation for or returning from their migration experience.

Developments in the formation program

The vocation program in the Philippines developed further in the 1990s. A new theology house was built in Quezon City and the novitiate began to be held locally, thus completing the formation program in the Philippines. A new place for the Novitiate was built in Cebu City in 1996, although it functioned initially as the house for the students of philosophy.

The community in the Philippines suffered the first losses, as Fr Nazareno Frattin, who was rector of the Scalabrini Formation Center, died in 1995 and the student Arthur Nitcha died in 1999.

To involve the theology students in the life of the province, a Regional Assembly of Scalabrinians in Asia (RASA) was started in 1995 and continued ever since as a moment of gathering of the missionaries working in Asia and the students.

THE YEARS 2000

Formation in Indonesia and Vietnam

A decisive development for formation occurred in 2001, with an informal opening of a vocation program in Indonesia, through the help of Sr Alicia Sandoval, of the Servants of Mary, a friend of Fr Carmen Hernandez, then the rector of the theology house. The small beginning led to the purchase of a place in Ruteng for the propaedeutic students and later to the house for the students of philosophy in Maumere. Eventually, a new seminary was built and inaugurated in 2019.

Through informal small beginnings, a vocation program was also started in Vietnam in 2004. Thanks to the availability of Fr Nguyen Van Dinh, a diocesan priest who embraced the Scalabrinian vocation, the program could take roots and several young people decided to become Scalabrinians. Hosted in three separate small buildings, the formators and students showed adaptability and resilience until a new seminary was built in 2012.

Missionary work

In Australia, the pastoral activities, comprising parishes, missions and chaplaincies, continued in the line of the tradition already established. New parishes were assigned to the Scalabrinians: St Therese in Mascot, near Sydney, in 2002; Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Mt. Pritchard in 2008; Holy Spirit in Brisbane in 2014. The parish of Dee Why was merged with that of Warringah.

The direction of the Australian Catholic Migrant & Refugee Office (ACMRO), the office of the episcopal conference which handles the migration issues, was assigned to a Scalabrinian, Fr Maurizio Pettenà, in 2009. In addition to developing the intercultural approach in the parish ministry, as all parishes are largely made up of migrants, the chaplaincy work expanded to include Spanish, Portuguese, Filipino and Timorese speaking migrants. Initiatives were also put in place to care for temporary migrants and students from Italy.

In 2002 a presence was established in Japan to assist migrants from the Philippines, Brazil and Peru. Migrants from Brazil and Peru were mostly nikkeijin, persons of Japanese descent as their ancestors had migrated from Japan to those countries in the 1930s. Because of the Japanese descent, they were given the possibility to remain in the country even as unskilled workers and to stay with their family. However, most of them did not speak Japanese and found it difficult to integrate in the country. Migrants from the Philippines were either persons who had married a Japanese and were now residents or workers who had entered and stayed in Japan in an irregular way. Frs Olmes Milani, Restituto Ogsimer and José Alirio Gutierrez focused initially on the learning of the Japa-

nese language and providing services to the migrant communities. Eventually, the Scalabrinians were given a role in the Catholic Tokyo International Centre (CTIC), in the Apostleship of the Sea in the diocese of Tokyo and the possibility to reside first in the parish of Tatebayashi and currently in Ota-shi, Gunma, in the diocese of Saitama.

In Taiwan, a new Stella Maris was built in Kaohsiung and the parish of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal was assigned to the Scalabrinians in 2012, with Fr Franco Lacanaria as the first parish priest and currently with Fr Li Tingyang John, the first Chinese Scalabrinian. In 2019, also the parish of Holy Family in the diocese of Tainan was assigned to the Scalabrinians, while the presence of Vietnamese and Indonesian missionaries allowed the expansion of the ministry to new groups of migrants. The missionaries also began assistance to fishermen, among the most abused and neglected migrants.

In Vietnam, a Vietnamese Scalabrinian is assisting the director at ECMI-VIE since 2016. One of the houses hosting seminarians prior to the building of the new seminary became a shelter for internal migrants studying in Ho Chi Minh City.

In Indonesia, a mission was started in 2018 in Batam Island, the industrial place very close to Singapore and very much involved with irregular migration and trafficking in persons. The Scalabrinians are now operating both in the Divine Mercy Parish and in the St. Therese Shelter.

CURRENT SCENARIO

The Scalabrinians of the St Frances Cabrini Province are ministering in 12 parishes (seven in Australia, three in Taiwan, one in Japan and one in Indonesia), three migrant centers, two episcopal conference offices, three apostleship of the sea shelters, many chaplaincies for migrants, and the pastoral care at six nursing homes.

Formation is carried out in seven seminaries (four in the Philippines, two in Indonesia and one in Vietnam).

In continuity with the last two General Chapters' indications on identity and renewal, the Province evaluated all missions based on the criteria of specificity, exemplarity and significance. Besides maintaining the validity of what is being done, some changes have been implemented in terms of pastoral models and movement of personnel according to the different migration contexts, responding to the new pastoral challenges.

Australia: 1) Concentrating our ministry as much as possible to migrants in the intercultural parishes where we are already present. 2) Strengthening according to our possibilities the ministry to the new growing groups of migrants, including international students. 3) Opening our ministry to some Vietnamese and Indonesian communities. 4) Supporting the initiatives of the Australian Catholic Migrants and Refugees Office (conferences, colloquiums, intercultural celebrations).

Philippines: 1) Ongoing discerning about how to "reinvent our mission to migrants". 2) Appointment of a lay person as director of SMC and adding an additional person to the existing staff.

Taiwan: 1) Opening of the ministry to Vietnamese migrants in the parish of Taipei by the first Vietnamese Scalabrinian assigned to Taiwan. 2) Opening of a mission in the Diocese of Tainan, assuming a parish and the coordination of the pastoral care of migrants in the Diocese. 3) Assigning personnel to form more inter-ethnic missionary teams. 4) Maintaining the existing pastoral services and developing the ministry to the fishermen and seafarers.

Japan: 1) Assignment of 3 young missionaries in view of strengthening and reinventing our missions. 2) More involvement in local parishes in the Archdiocese of Tokyo and the Diocese of Saitama. 3) Acceptance of the AOS Tokyo.

Indonesia: 1) Opening of a mission in Batam Island, involving a parish and shelter for migrants. 2) Building of a new seminary for the philosophy students.

Vietnam: 1) Continuing the presence in the office for migrants of the Episcopal Conference. 2) Supporting the internal migrants (students) through a house for migrants in Ho Chi Minh City. 3) Implementation of the Exodus program. 4) Ministering to the Chinese community.

LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Even if the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the process, the province is updating the Provincial Missionary Project. Some perspectives we would like to foster are:

Australia

- Empowerment of our missions in Australia with prepared personnel joining our already intercultural communities.
- Reflecting on and implementing the best pastoral models according to the reality of migration in Australia and the evangelization efforts of the local Churches.
- Strengthening the particular attention to the international students affirming the good initiatives already taking place and increasing the networking with parishes and universities.
- Networking with other institutions serving refugees and asylum seekers.
- Maintaining and hopefully increasing our service in Church Offices.
- Reflecting on the present and future involvement of the Scalabrinians in the administration of the Scalabrini Villages and San Carlo Homes for the Aged.
- Implementing a safeguarding culture following the indications from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Philippines

- Preparation of personnel to keep the good legacy of our pastoral service in view of reinventing our missionary approach. This also entails developing feasible planning to replace the personnel with qualified and experienced confreres or lay people to serve in the specific sectors.
- Opening a parish within the next 3 years.
- Leading the networking in the Province of the pastoral services in the AOS field (seafarers and fishermen) and in the shelters for migrants.

- Supporting the outreach of ECMI with the flying missions to the Middle East and with the services to refugees in the Philippines.

Taiwan

- Empowering the intercultural approach in our parishes and strengthening the already meaningful ministry to Filipinos, Indonesians and Vietnamese communities.
- Developing the AOS at national level through the Scalabrinian Networking, serving seafarers and fishermen, which is the most vulnerable group, as a specific ministry.

Japan

- With the recent assignment of the first Vietnamese Scalabrinian Missionary, we aim to begin serving the Vietnamese community in the Diocese of Saitama.
- We plan to widen our service even with the possibility of accepting a parish within the next 3 years.
- Developing projects for the Apostleship of the Sea Tokyo and networking with AOS missions.

Indonesia

- Developing a diocesan pastoral center or a training center for migrants in the old seminary of Maumere.
- Aiming in the next 3 years to serve the local Church by working in the office for Migrants of the Indonesian Bishop's Conference in Jakarta.
- Empowering the mission in Batam developing the shelter for migrants.

Vietnam

- To continue the flying missions to Malaysia, South Korea and Cambodia.
- To follow up the Exodus program.

Flying missions and further expansion in Asia

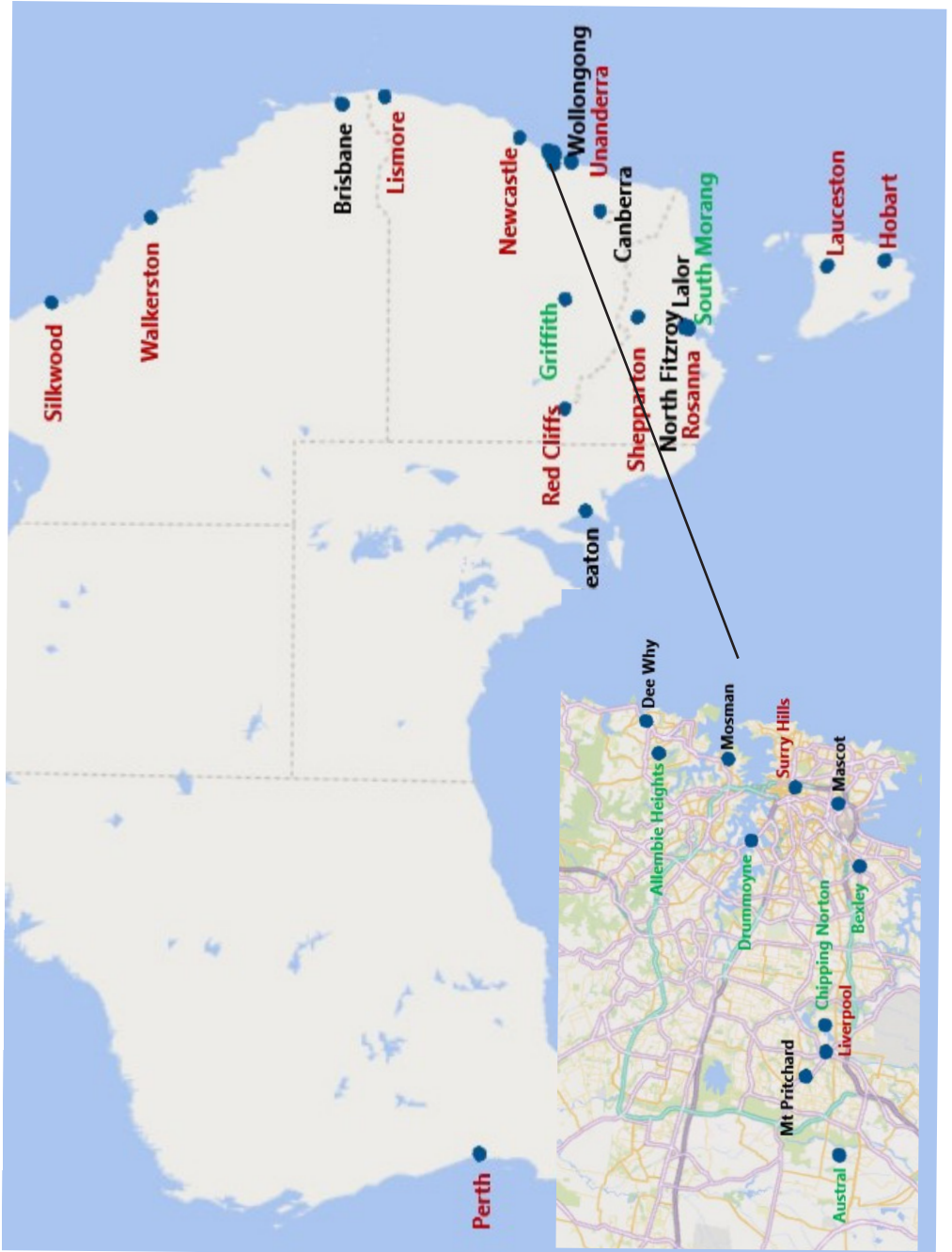
In the XV General Chapter, the Gulf countries and Malaysia were highlighted as areas where the Scalabrinians should be. Furthermore, we have received requests to help in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Presently, the province does not have the resources to expand in those directions. A more solid pastoral base needs to be implemented in the countries where we have a formation program. For now, Filipino and Vietnamese migrants in other countries, can be served through flying missions. Perhaps, with a missionary group of first aid we may be able to intervene in emergency situations.

The pastoral challenge that we are developing with good initiatives and enthusiasm is in the service of seafarers and particularly the pastoral care of fishermen, who are the most vulnerable.

The large field of opportunities to work with migrants in Australia and Asia deserve the attention of lay people who are willing to volunteer some of their time, talents and energy in the service of others.

SCALABRINIAN MISSIONS IN AUSTRALIA

(In red, closed missions. In green the Villages for elderly migrants)



SCALABRINIAN MISSIONS IN ASIA

