

Vatican City, 17th December 2010

**Prot. N. 5658/2010/M-R**

Your Excellency,

With deep sadness I learn the news of the tragic shipwreck, on the morning of 15th December, of the boat carrying the hopes of dozens of brothers and sisters seeking asylum, tragically sunk on the rocks of Christmas Island.

I wish to express my heartfelt condolences and my spiritual closeness to the families of the victims, most probably of Afghan and Iraq origin.

I assure you of my prayers for these souls lost at sea and for the survivors. In the meantime, I encourage you to keep on with your generous and passionate work in favour of migrants and asylum seekers. You may always rely on my support and esteem.

Yours sincerely,

✠ Antonio Maria Vegliò  
*President*

Fr. Gabriele F. Bentoglio  
*Under-Secretary*

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His Excellency  
Bishop Joseph Grech  
President of Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office  
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
Canberra