



## **OCEANIA/AUSTRALIA - Compassion towards immigrants: young Australians welcome Pope Francis' appeal**

(Agenzia Fides) - A cry of "compassion" towards immigrants and asylum seekers, especially towards children: Pope Francis' appeal in Lampedusa was welcomed by the association "Australian Young Christian Students" (AYCS), asking politicians to give special attention to children currently "confined" in camps and detention, according to the immigration system in force in Australia.

As reported in a statement sent to Fides, the AYCS raised its voice after Pope Francis' visit in Lampedusa, which has brought international attention to the phenomenon of immigration and the immense suffering of the immigrants. In Australia, the issue is very sensitive and is at the center of a lively public debate.

"Children are particularly vulnerable and have come to Australia in search of help", says the note by AYCS sent to Fides. "What remains vital to their health and well-being is that children and their families are not subjected to long periods of detention". A recent report by "Human Rights Watch reveals that, in the migratory flows affecting Southeast Asia and the Pacific, often minors and their parents are arbitrarily arrested, in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, and are victims of severe abuse. Children who arrive in Australia, therefore, "seek stability and security that all children deserve", notes the Association of young Christians, inviting to the "full respect of international law."

Recently, more than 8,000 high school students across Australia carried out volunteer work in detention camps for immigrants, reactivated in Australia since 1992 for all immigrants arriving in the country without a visa. (PA)  
(Agenzia Fides 10/07/2013)