

# July Reflection

**Displaced People** – “There are many rooms in my father’s house”. John 14:2

Migration is not a new phenomenon, it is part of human history. Abraham, our father in faith, was a migrant, departing his country in obedience to God, ‘Leave your country, your family and your father’s house, for the land I will show you’. (Genesis 12:1).

Jesus, our Saviour, was a refugee, ‘...the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him”. (Matthew 2:13). It is estimated that today there are approximately 120 million people on the move across the globe, a mixture of migrants and refugees. Each have their own story.

In 1891 Pope Leo XIII wrote ‘no one would exchange their own country for a foreign land if their own afforded them the means of a decent and happy life’. Migrants and refugees abandon their homeland in search of those things we hold dear, peace, stability, security, freedom from persecution and better opportunities. Some of them find a way to our shores.

‘Love the stranger then, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt’, Scripture tells us, (Deuteronomy 10:19).

Many of our parishes are implementing the Biblical admonition to, ‘love the stranger’, providing English language classes in parish centres, opening their parish kitchens that refugees can cook their cultural meals, appealing for bicycles to lessen transportation costs, for warm clothing, directing them to local schools.

In Isaiah a verse describing the action of the one sent by God as justice is pursued states, ‘He does not break the crushed reed nor quench the wavering flame’. We salute all in our parishes who in their accompaniment and outreach to migrants and refugees are keeping alive the flame of hope within them.

Going to the aid to migrants, refugees, displaced person, asylum seekers is more than an act of almsgiving and kindness – it is also an act of justice.

Our solidarity with migrants and refugees arises from our Christian faith which teaches that everyone whatever their origin in created in the image and likeness of God and has infinite worth.

Assisting the stranger in our midst is integral to our faith, and is not contingent on whether that person is a citizen, a migrant, a refugee or an asylum seeker. Regardless of visa status or how they arrived among us human dignity is to be honoured.

So sacrosanct is a person’s dignity it needs to be protected and promoted. Though we may never have met a migrant or refugee in person we can still oppose laws and attitudes which threaten to undermine, marginalise or ostracise them. To do so is a declaration that we believe they are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I have been privileged to some migrants and refugees in various centres in our country where they are housed. The memory of one particular encounter, in Napier Barracks, remains with me. When asked as a general question, what he wanted, a young man who had fled South Sudan to escape being conscripted for war, did not reply that he was seeking employment, status, house or money, but simply, ‘I would like to see my mother’. A reminder, if we needed one, that migrants and refugees in desperation as they flee danger often reluctantly leave behind what is dearest to them.

**Lord Jesus,  
Remind us that you were a refugee,  
Your Blessed Mother and St Joseph  
left behind all they knew, all they had  
and all who they loved to protect you.  
You grew up in a foreign land dependant  
on the kindness of strangers.  
Let us see in all migrants an icon of  
Your Holy Family and treat them  
with the welcome and compassion  
we would offer You.  
Amen.**

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