



I was a stranger and you welcomed me

(Matthew 25:35)

Welcome the stranger

Jesus identifies Himself as a stranger to be welcomed (Matthew 25:35). The Catholic Church teaches that Christ has in some way united himself to every person, whether or not one is aware of this. Christ will consider done to himself the kind of treatment that is reserved to any human person, in particular, to the least among them, the stranger. While the gospel compels us to welcome strangers it also presents the opportunity to practice the commandment to love God *“with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength”* and to love the other *“as you love yourself”* Mark 12:29-31. Pope John Paul II invites us to an ever deeper awareness of the mission of the Catholic Church: *“to see Christ in every brother and sister in need, to proclaim and defend the dignity of every migrant, every displaced person and every refugee. In this way, assistance given will not be considered an alms from the goodness of our heart, but an act of justice due to them”*.

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This pamphlet represents a compilation of Catholic Social Teaching on migration and asylum from various sources. For more information and a complete list of sources please visit www.acmro.catholic.org.au/policy

The Holy Family in Exile

The exiled Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are for all times and all places, the models and protectors of every migrant, pilgrim and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave their native land, their beloved parents and relatives, their close friends, and to seek a foreign soil.



'Flight into Egypt' by Fr Lawrence Lew, O.P., <http://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/2333273671>. Licence at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0>.

For God decreed that His only Son should experience the hardship and grief of exile. The firstborn among many of our brothers and sisters, and precede them in it. For this reason, the Catholic Church seeks to look after and care for refugees and migrants in their trials and welcome the stranger who knocks at our door seeking refuge.



Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People



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**WHAT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHES
ON ASYLUM AND MIGRATION**



Healing a global wound

The Catholic Church teaches that all people have the right to live a dignified life in their homeland. Tragically, over 45 million people around the world are displaced. This festering wound typifies and reveals the imbalances and conflicts of the modern world. War, natural calamities, persecution and discrimination of every kind have deprived millions of their home, employment, family and homeland.

The right to seek asylum

The Catholic Church teaches that anyone whose life is threatened has the right to protection. Whether because of persecution, armed conflicts, natural disasters, or economic conditions that threaten their lives or physical integrity. It is the element of persecution, threat or danger, or being forcibly displaced that gives rise to a right to seek asylum rather than to migrate through ordinary channels.

Love your neighbour as yourself
(Matthew 22:39)



Human Dignity

The Catholic Church teaches that human life is sacred because each person is created in the image and likeness of God. Human dignity is inalienable. The human dignity and human rights of asylum seekers must be respected, regardless of their citizenship, visa status or mode of arrival.

The Catholic Church teaches that the demands of human dignity always come before the national interest

Devotion to humanity

The Catholic Church teaches that all nations have a right to regulate migration across their borders. This right is coupled with the duty to protect and help innocent victims and those fleeing for their lives. The right of nations to regulate their borders is an extension of the right of all persons to live a dignified life in their community. Borders are for the protection of people, not for the exclusion of people seeking protection.

Justice and Mercy

The Catholic Church teaches that the purpose of the law is to serve justice and mercy. Laws, which subject asylum seekers to arbitrary and prolonged immigration detention or banish them from seeking protection, fail to uphold justice and mercy and are immoral. It is not illegal to seek asylum. Many asylum seekers are survivors of crimes, torture and trauma. Indefinite detention adds further stress and suffering, impacting on their mental and physical health. The Catholic Church advocates the implementation of just and rapid procedures to determine each person's claim for protection.

Solidarity

The Catholic Church teaches that the most vulnerable people are not simply those who are in a needy situation to whom we kindly offer an act of solidarity, but are members of our family with whom we have a duty to share the resources we have. Solidarity towards migrants and refugees is inscribed in the common membership to the human family.

The right to be part of a community

The Catholic Church teaches that all people have the right to be part of a community. Asylum seekers who have been forced from their homeland have a duty to integrate into the host community. We must favour this integration by helping migrants to find a place where they can live in peace and safety, where they can work and take on the rights and duties that exist in the country that welcomes them.

Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me
(Matthew 25:40)

