

Go, you are sent... to refugees and migrants

“...So Joseph got up, and taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt.”

MATTHEW 2:14

The plight of refugees fleeing from war, human rights abuse and inhuman conditions has been the subject of both the words and actions of Pope Francis, as for example, when he took Syrian refugees to the Vatican.

The number of refugees coming to New Zealand is controlled by the Refugee Quota, which has allowed 750 UNHCR refugees to settle here each year. The quota has been increased to 1000, and there have been some special quotas allowed. On a per capita basis New Zealand accepts far fewer refugees than other developed countries. For example, we have five times fewer refugees per head of population than Australia and about 47 times fewer than Sweden. We are 87th in the world for refugees per head of population.

Migrants may not be forcibly displaced as refugees are, but they leave their home country in order to find conditions in which their families can thrive. Whether the newcomer is a refugee or migrant, “each of them has a name, a face, and a story, as well as an inalienable right to live in peace and to aspire to a better future for their sons and daughters.” (Pope Francis Sep 2016)

Refugees and migrants have overcome many hurdles to come here, bringing with them a wealth of gifts and talents. The Catholic community is benefiting greatly from the vibrant and committed faith of migrants and refugees.

Catholic Social Services manages the response to refugees in the Archdiocese. It works closely with the Red Cross which has government contracts relating to refugee resettlement. Some Catholic parishes are involved in assisting with refugee resettlement.

1. What involvement have parishes and schools in your area had with refugees?
2. How can we grow “merciful hearts” (Pope Francis, World Youth Day Poland 2016)?
3. How can we further assist refugees, both those who come here and those who are waiting for a country to accept them?



“A merciful heart is able to be a place of refuge for those who are without a home or have lost their home; a merciful heart is able to build a home and a family for those forced to emigrate; it knows the meaning of tenderness and compassion. A merciful heart opens up to welcome refugees and migrants.”

POPE FRANCIS, WORLD YOUTH DAY POLAND 2016

“Migrants are our brothers and sisters in search of a better life, far away from poverty, hunger, exploitation and the unjust distribution of the planet’s resources which are meant to be equitably shared by all. Don’t we all want a better, more decent and prosperous life to share with our loved ones?... The presence of migrants and refugees seriously challenges the various societies which accept them. Those societies are faced with new situations which could create serious hardship unless they are suitably motivated, managed and regulated. How can we ensure that integration will become mutual enrichment, open up positive perspectives to communities, and prevent the danger of discrimination, racism, extreme nationalism or xenophobia?”

POPE FRANCIS, MESSAGE FOR WORLD DAY OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS 2016

“Migrants should be treated according to certain rules, because migration is a right, but one which is highly regulated. On the other hand, to be a refugee means coming from a terrible situation of war, anguish, hunger and the status of a refugee requires more care, more work.”

POPE FRANCIS, IN-FLIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE, NOV 2016

“What do I think of countries that close their frontiers? I think that, in theory, hearts must not be closed to refugees, but those who govern need prudence. They must be very open to receiving refugees, but they also have to calculate how best to settle them, because refugees must not only be accepted, but also integrated. Consequently, if a country has, say, the ability to integrate twenty persons, they should do this. Another country that has greater capacity should do more. But always with an open heart: it is not human to close the door, it is not human to close the heart, and in the long run, a price is paid for this.”

POPE FRANCIS, IN-FLIGHT PRESS CONFERENCE, NOV 2016