

Welcome the Stranger

Praying in solidarity with refugees
from around the world

“We must cry out against injustice or by our silence consent to it. If we keep silent, the very stones of the street will cry out.” *Dorothy Day*

Almost eleven years ago when writing the introduction to the anthology ‘Entertaining Angels’, I wrote that *‘when the anthology was considered there was a sense of urgency to provide new, stimulating material for the many worshipping communities around the world who aim to be alongside people in desperate need of compassion, love and care. The urgency is even greater now as western global societies and local communities appear to lack understanding and compassion for women, children and men in acute distress. Our global neighbours are refugees and asylum seekers, people held in detention... I am sure we need to have far higher regard for humankind, for people in all their flesh and blood, hurt and agony, joy and sadness, laughter and tears, the tortured and the humiliated’.* (April 2005)

Today in 2016, the urgency is sadly now even greater.

We also need to counteract the opinion of some people who are shouting loudly against welcoming refugees. People are fleeing war and climate change. They leave in search of safety. Even leaving creates more dangers for them. Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, Somalia, Congo, Sudan, coming to Calais, Dunkirk, Lesbos ... the list grows ... and behind the list and the news headlines there are women, men and children who suffer.

Why are they forsaken?

“Every thought, every word and every action that adds to the positive and the wholesome is a contribution to peace. Each and every one of us is capable of making a contribution.” *Aung San Suu Kyi*

I believe the time is long overdue to stop the talk and take to action, to challenge the ill-conceived perceptions and fears of people who set up metaphorical walls around themselves.

Let’s challenge with facts, challenge with questions, challenge on values... Let’s challenge our government with words such as:

- * respect
- * dignity
- * compassion
- * hospitality
- * justice

and let’s give hospitality to refugees. Let’s show that parishes and communities are happy to welcome refugees and enable them to integrate.

Geoff Duncan, Lent 2016

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels, without knowing it. (Hebrews 13.2)

How to use this selection of poems and prayers, on your own or with a group

This collection is offered to invite you to journey through Lent with people coming to Europe for safe refuge. Each section marks a stage in the process of securing asylum and leave to remain: arriving in a new country, making an asylum claim, experiencing hardship or destitution, possibly being detained, making decisions about how to move forward, finding a time of hope.

We suggest you choose one section for each week in Lent. There are some additional questions at the end of the pack to help you review your journey and choose how you would like to respond: in further prayer, in fasting or action, such as helping with hosting scheme or donating money.

If you or your group are not familiar with issues facing refugees, please see www.jrsuk.net or other resources for more information.

Walk with Us

Loving God

Walk with us

as we move

from our security.

Compassionate Christ

re-assure

re-new

and re-commit us to a life of service

with no strings attached

where we will live for justice and
peace

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“Our European communities today need to be reminded that these values of solidarity and hospitality are needed now more than ever. When we compare refugee crises of the past, in South East Asia or Africa or the ones after World War II, the one that we are experiencing now is on a par with these.”

*John Dardis SJ, President,
Conference European
Jesuit Provincials*

Week One: arriving in a new country

At the port, the smuggler has taken all my money. I don't have documents to prove who I am. How do I apply for asylum? What if they send me back? I can't explain because I don't speak the language.

The Journey

(for the thousands of innocents who have died on journeys)

I left.

I had to.

I'd stayed long enough and tried hard, but it was not enough, and then he said 'Come with me' again. I tried not to look back but it was hard. The wind biting my face made my tears sting and so I tried to stop crying. I couldn't, not just then. So I stopped trying and I left.

When I'd found the tomb empty, scary initially and then blindingly obvious: 'He's not here, he is risen', you were as surprised, scared and uncomprehending as I was at first. It was only later that our stories began to diverge. After the wind changed and we all received the Holy Spirit, it was then you started measuring, meeting, deciding.

Who was in and who was out, who was greatest, who didn't count, who could decide and who couldn't. I couldn't stop you. You didn't listen.

So I left.

I'd heard of many journeys since I'd first known him. The unexpected ones that pulled you up sharp and made you think of your own direction. A pregnant woman on the way to comply with occupying forces, a bunch of night workers singing strange songs, a party of lost academics bringing unlooked for gifts, a flight in the night accompanied by the sound of weeping. Not all journeys are confident and happy ones.

It seemed he was always journeying somewhere. When I first caught up with him, in the hill country, having listened to challenging words about making peace and mourning, all I could do was follow, make bread with other women, observe and listen. I watched them all as I watched him. Some got it straight away. They hardly hung around but were straight back to their communities, sharing, building, healing. Others never seemed to get it; how much did it cost? Or could they just go halfway? Not all journeys are straightforward and clear ones.

There was the last journey, if indeed it was the last.

The one to Jerusalem again, this time with a shadow hanging over him, even during the donkey parade and it wasn't caused by those waving branches. It was much more sinister. You have to look inside yourself to find the rest of that one. We, the women, followed him to the hill, dragged there by the Romans, dragged down by his own cross. Not all journeys finish in the way you expect.

No, the journey was not over. There was the tomb and the garden and now we're off again. Sometimes my mind runs on ahead, maybe that's normal too.

I wonder where we'll fetch up, this side of the sea or the next island? As we stand on the shore, waiting for a boat, I hear the others say that is the way to Europe. I hope so. Will we see the other shore?

© Janet Lees

Feast of Epiphany 06.01.2016

The Refugee Tales project is a walk organised by the Gatwick Detainees Welfare Group in collaboration with the University of Kent, in particular, the School of English. People walk together for a common cause. As they walk they share stories; they are in solidarity with refugees and people who are detained.

Refugee Tales

You said
 you wanted us to listen

You wanted us to hold
 your story

The story you carried
and tried to protect
crossing broken borders
war ridden shot at at at at

When you unfurled we held out our
weight-bearing hands
 to relieve you
 of the weight of sand-
 crushed mis-shapen stone-
heavy
 pain-fractured
 smouldering story

over and over and over again
many times
as we many walked on migration from
Dover

field and furrow gully and barrow
hill and hedgerow
hacked and hewn
trampled pounded and pestle

And we fed you with stories of
 living and breathing
weeping and
 wanting
 change

You talked we
moulded

kneaded
forged
shaped
released your story

it flew undetained

your story became each night new voices
 strange sounds, songs, tales foretold

You ate with us, laughed with us, walked
with us
cried out in the night with us

Your story became our story became your
story became
 one story

landscape
of belonging of welcome
translation to thatch and oast-house
commons and greens
bridleways

lost and found, kitchen love
bent-back branches, budding blackberries,
glimpsed birds,
half heard fragments of sentences
gates turned, lights out, hard floors,
wept-for showers,
refuge in a pub

exhaustion
migration
 transformation

the story of the walk

Call No-one Stranger

This poem can be read by many different voices...

You first saw them by the roadside
standing at the crossroads, waiting...
listening... watching

They walked in silence, small bundles
on their backs
clutching other bits in their hands.

Fears on the faces of those women,
men and children

Frightened of the past fearful of the
future

Will no one understand their pain?
Will any one open a door to receive
them?

Look again and you will see
familiar people...

mothers and fathers,
sisters and brothers,
grandparents.

Listen and you will hear
familiar sounds...

talking, crying, laughing...

Understand and you will know
the stuff of which your dreams are
made...

love and laughter, security and safety,
peace and prosperity...
are their dreams too.

That which is joy to every human heart
is not alien to theirs

The peace you long for is that same peace
they strive for.

We stand together as one...
drawing warmth from the same
sun and

life from the same earth

and though we travel on different roads
We're part of one God, one Earth, One
Universe...

There are no strangers.
tears shed in compassion...

songs of love and dreams of peace
make us all one.

Recognise your family in the stranger
Open your door, invite them in
to sit at your table
and share your bread.

Call no one stranger
whose roots are kin to your own...
whose lives all spring from the
One Great Fountain of Life!

© Patricia Mulhall



Week Two: making an asylum claim

The process is confusing. The interview is intimidating. Why don't they believe me? The questions feel like a violation, a reopening of a wound. My lawyer won't reply, he has gone out of business. I don't know what to do, this feels so unjust.



Don't Call Me a Stranger: The Cry of a Migrant

Don't call me a stranger:
the language I speak sounds different
but the feelings it expresses are the same.

Don't call me a stranger:
I need to communicate,
especially when language is not
understood.

Don't call me a stranger:
I need to be together,
Especially when loneliness cools my heart.

Don't call me a stranger:
I need to feel at home,
Especially when mine is very far away from
yours.

Don't call me a stranger:
I need a family because mine I've
left to work for yours.

Don't call me a stranger:
The soil we step on is the same
but mine is not the 'promised land'.

Don't call me a stranger:
The colour of my passport is different
but the colour of our blood is the same.

Don't call me a stranger:
I toil and struggle in your land
and the sweat of our brows is the same.

Don't call me a stranger:
Borders, we created them
and the separation that results is the same.

Don't call me a stranger:
I am just your friend
but you do not know yet.

Don't call me a stranger:
We cry for justice and peace in different ways
but our God is the same.

Don't call me a stranger:
Yes! I am a migrant
but our God is the same.

© National Council of Churches, India

Removing the Roadblocks

Caring Christ
prompt us
to hear the cries of the people
who are living with a stigma.

Caring Christ
motivate us
to act for people who are valuable
as individual human beings.

Compassionate Christ
free us from our hesitancy
to walk with the unknown,
to support people to become
empowered
and gain
their dignity.

Compassionate Christ
liberate us from the status quo
so that we will
act
campaign and
remove roadblocks
for people
(of whatever age)
who are dispossessed

© *Geoff Duncan*



Week Three: destitution & hardship

I have no permission to work, I cannot claim benefits or find a place to live. I stayed with a friend for a while, but they said I had to move out. I moved in with someone from my community, but I don't feel welcome. I have to stay out all day, so I am not in the way. I can't afford to phone my lawyer. I am hungry sometimes.

Waiting with Hope

Children wandering in the mud and filth,

Women comforting their babies,

Men trying to protect their families when sprayed with CS gas.

People riding the stormy seas in unseaworthy dinghies and make-shift boats. Lives lost, children drowned

People waiting for hope in their fears, desolation and weariness.

Lord of Life
they wait with Hope
for release from their bondage and poverty.

Lord of Active Compassion
we sympathise
but help us to empathise.

Give us the mind-set to 'get up and go'.
Inspire us through
Aid and Relief Workers
Individual Volunteers
Peace Activists
Health Practitioners
Teachers
who accept challenges and take risks
so that people who wait in Hope will be liberated.

(You may know people who are taking Hope to the dispossessed. Name them here...)

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Easter Litany

Risen Christ
when darkness overwhelms us
may your dawn beckon

When fear paralyses us
may your touch release us

When grief torments us
may your peace enfold us

When memories haunt us
may your presence heal us

When justice fails us
may your anger ignite us

When apathy stagnates us
may your challenge renew us

When courage leaves us
may your spirit inspire us

When despair grips us
may your hope restore us

And when death threatens us
may your resurrection light lead us

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit**

© Annabel Shilson-Thomas/CAFOD

Week Four: detention

It feels like I have been imprisoned, but have no idea how long my sentence will be. Each week some others are deported. I am afraid. The days turn into weeks and months. It is a listless, monotonous place, full of anxiety.

Detention: A Time of Waiting

A knock at the door,
A scream of terror and fear
A woman
A mother
A daughter
Taken from her family
bundled into a van
wire at the windows
dark inside.
To a detention centre.

A time of mental anguish.

No welcome
No dignity,
Only a cell
Shut away
Incarcerated
for
Hours and hours
each day.

A time of waiting
I need to consider:
What will become of the
Woman
Mother
Daughter
waiting for deportation,
to a country
once her home,
now
A foreign land.
No family
Only fear.

To the reader whether for personal reflection or meditation in a small group:

*Light your own candle in a container.
Have a supply if in a group.
Create plenty of light; create warmth.
Consider actions appropriate to a situation known to you.
Remember to own your actions.
If personal reflection picture in your mind situations known to you.
If in a small group join hands for Justice as the candles are lit.*

Light a Candle

It is better to light a candle:
be courageous,
put evil to shame.

It is better to speak up:
be fearless in our freedom,
challenge injustice.

It is better to encourage people to:
be compassionate,
walk in solidarity for peace

It is better to remove the darkness:
be clear in our aims,
to remove prejudice,

and create LIGHT.

© Geoff Duncan

May Your Kingdom Come

May fear strike no longer,
Let pain fade away,
May earthly power be challenged.
When it plunders the poor,
And tramples on hope.

God of peace, may your kingdom come

Help us to put away the weapons of war.
Help us to destroy the tools of destruction,
May earthly power be challenged
When it plunders the poor,
And tramples on hope.

God of peace, may your kingdom come

Teach us to follow the ways of justice,
Teach us to walk the paths of truth,
Let integrity challenge the power that plunders,
When it tramples the poor
And pours scorn on our hope

God of peace, may your kingdom come

Brings peace sweet as honey,
Bring peace like a shield,
And may we be the challenge
To earthly power that plunders
And tramples on hope

God of peace, may your kingdom come

© Linda Jones/CAFOD

I Believe...

I believe that behind the mist the sun waits.
I believe that beyond the dark night
It is raining stars.
I believe in secret volcanoes and the world below.
I believe that this lost ship will reach port.
They will not rob me of hope,
It shall not be broken,
It shall not be broken
My voice is filled to overflowing
with the desire to sing,
the desire to sing...

I believe in reason and not in force of arms.
I believe that peace will be sown throughout the earth.
I believe in our nobility created in the image of God,
and with free will reaching for the skies.
They will not rob me of hope,
It shall not be broken,
It shall not be broken.

Source unknown, from They Shall Not Rob Us of Hope, Chile, World Council of Churches © CAFOD



Week Five: solidarity

I came to JRS. People made me welcome. No-one pushed me for my story. I met others with the same experience. That was so much easier. I felt free, I could trust them.

Passion for Justice

Give us the confidence to challenge
injustice

And to nurture the flame of justice until
it burns brightly.

And may the Spirit of Justice and
community

Accompany you and light your way.

May the Spirit move you, heal you,
Call you to action and to prayer

May this passion for justice burn
through you and in you

And may it warm the hearts of those
around you

Encouraging hope and overcoming
fear

© CAFOD

We Dare to Imagine a World Where...

We dare to imagine a world
Where hunger has no chance to show its
face

We dare to dream of a world
Where war and terror are afraid to leave
their mark

We long to believe in a world
Of hope unchained and lives unfettered
We dare to share in the creation of a world
Where your people break free.

Dare we open our minds to difference?
Dare we open our own lives to change?

Your kingdom come, O Lord
Your will be done

© Linda Jones/CAFOD



Hope and Solidarity

Lord, you set your face toward Jerusalem
and walked alongside
those who suffer.
Be our vision that we too may walk the way
of the cross
and extend a hand to those we meet.

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you stopped to heal the sick, cure the
lame
and gave your sight to the blind.
Be our vision that we too may give time to
others
and respond to their needs.

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you said, 'The first shall be last and
the last first.'
Be our vision that we too may work towards
your kingdom
when the exalted will be brought low and
the lowly exalted.

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you ate with tax collectors and sinners
and heard their stories.
Be our vision that we too may listen to the
despised and rejected and
value their lives.

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you took time to pray and time to be
silent.
Be our vision that through our prayers,
fasting and almsgiving
we too may draw closer to you and find your
way.

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit.**

Lord, you entered Jerusalem with peace in
your heart.
Be our vision that we too may desire peace
where others desire war,
and may work for justice where injustice
reigns.

**Lord give us the gladness of your help
and support us with a willing spirit.
For you are our hope and our salvation.**

*© Annabel Shilson-Thomas
(Permission Sought)*

Week Six: a time of hope?

God of All Humanity

In a world full of fear,
Open our hearts to your love

Though we walk in desolate valleys,
Open our minds to your hope

As we seek paths in the darkness,
Open our eyes to your light.

We turn from hatred,
Towards love

We turn away from intolerance,
Towards understanding.
Sisters and brothers,
We commit ourselves to compassion.
Together, not alone,
We pray for peace.

Amen

© *Linda Jones/CAFOD*



Risen Christ

Risen Christ,
As you stay with us,
Open our eyes to see the needs in your world,
Open our ears to hear the cries
Of the poor
Of the suffering
Of the marginalised.
Give us the courage and the tenacity to take
our spoken
Prayers into serious action.
Move us from our security
To walk with humankind,
the refugees
the unaccompanied children
who search for their parents
the people who leave
war-torn countries

Knowing that you Risen Christ
Will support us
As we stand for justice and peace.

Risen Christ on this Easter Day
May things change because of us.

© *Geoff Duncan*

About Jesuit Refugee Service

Unlike our frontiers,
God's frontiers may be crossed
with permit or passport.
There is a frontier I may cross
deep within my heart.
There is a frontier I may cross
as I reach out in concern
to another person's need.
Always I live on the frontier.

© Congregational Prayer Fellowship,
CMS Newsletter, July-September,
1995. Slightly adapted. From 'Keeping
Hope Alive' JRS and Andes Press
Agency

What does it mean "a time of hope"?
We have come to the end of 6 weeks
of reflections and prayers.

The asylum seekers we accompany
are often waiting for 6 months, for 6
years...

How do they live with uncertainty or
where might they find hope during
such a long wait? What might hope
be grounded in during that time?

**Please see the next page for some
suggestions of how to reflect on
what you have learnt and invitations
of how to respond.**

The **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)** is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate on behalf of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

JRS undertakes services at national and regional levels with the support of an international office in Rome. Founded in November 1980 as a work of the Society of Jesus, JRS was officially registered on 19 March 2000 at the Vatican State as a foundation.

JRS programmes are found in 50 countries, providing assistance to: refugees in camps and cities, individuals displaced within their own countries, asylum seekers in cities, and to those held in detention centres. The main areas of work are in the field of education, emergency assistance, healthcare, livelihood activities and social services. At the end of 2013, more than 900,000 individuals were direct beneficiaries of JRS projects.

Our values are:

- * Dignity
- * Compassion
- * Solidarity
- * Hope
- * Hospitality
- * Justice
- * Participation

**Learn more and support our work at:
www.jrs.net & at www.jrsuk.net**

To Reflect

Please take a quiet moment to reflect upon the prayers, meditations and spiritual poems in this Lent and Easter compilation.

- * Which writings helped to relate to situations in the news at this time?
- * Think about the refugees especially the women, men and children in camps at Calais and Dunkirk.
- * How can you respond to some of the needs reported by the media?

In the prayer *Hope and Solidarity* by Annabel Shilson-Thomas read again in verse five: *Be our vision that through our prayers, fasting and almsgiving we may draw closer to you and find your way.* What is your own vision or idea of what you might do in response?

Think about how you may through prayer this Lent:

- * Draw closer to a refugee: (read again *Walk with Us* at the beginning of this compilation)
- * Fast and provide food for a hungry refugee family;
- * Consider almsgiving to provide help for a destitute family.

Donate

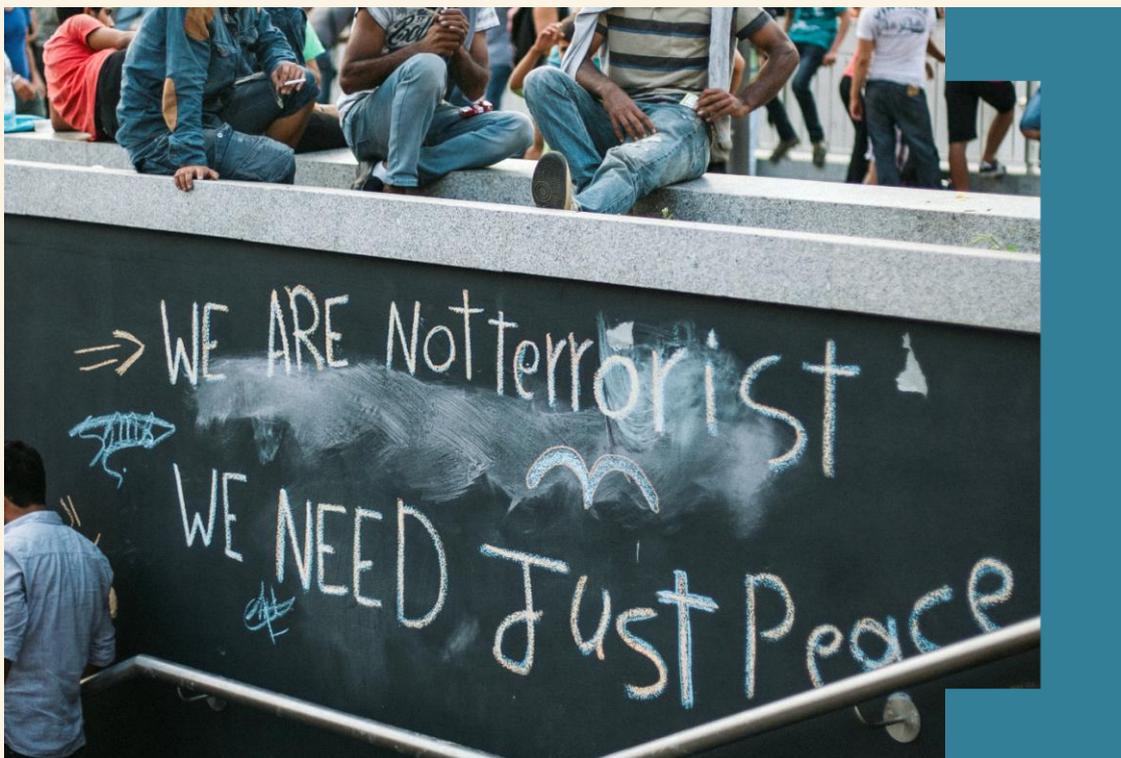
Please consider a gift this Lent

To JRS UK at

www.justgiving.com/jesuitrefugeeservice

& JRS Europe at

jrseurope.org/donate



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Let Justice Roll Down is a Christian Aid/CAFOD Anthology for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Entertaining Angels is a Worship anthology on sharing Christ's hospitality.

Eternal Springs is an anthology of Hope.

Let Justice Roll Down

Don't Call Me a Stranger: The Cry of a Migrant © National Council of Churches India

God of All Humanity © Linda Jones/CAFOD

Hope and Solidarity © Annabel Shilson-Thomas Permission Sought

I Believe ... Source Unknown Chile from They Shall Not Rob Us of Hope © CAFOD

May Your Kingdom Come © Linda Jones/CAFOD

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Eternal Springs

Easter Litany © Annabel Shilson-Thomas/CAFOD

Removing the Roadblocks © Geoff Duncan

Risen Christ © Geoff Duncan

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Other Occasions

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“They are human people, I stress this, who are appealing for solidarity and assistance, who need urgent action but also and above all understanding and kindness. God is good, let us imitate God. Their condition cannot leave us indifferent.” *Pope Francis*



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