

The Star Still Shines

Praying in Solidarity with refugees
from around the world

For Advent, Christmas, Epiphany
and beyond

2015



Praying in solidarity with refugees from around the world

There is a desperate need for ... care ... love ... compassion to be shown to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants; to accept these friends as people whoever they are and from wherever they come.

The urgency is great and as in previous times leaders of the government have lacked understanding and compassion for women, men and children in great distress.

These people are leaving war torn situations and lands where there is hunger and strife. There are child soldiers. There are the victims of organised trafficking which includes being sold into various forms of slavery, including the labour market and sexual encounters. They are looking for the arms that will stretch out and hug them. Lives are in great danger.

Our global neighbours are refugees, asylum seekers and people held in detention. People in society led by the Church and other faith communities need to have a

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. Basic human rights are denied to many people in our global situation.

Each person is precious.

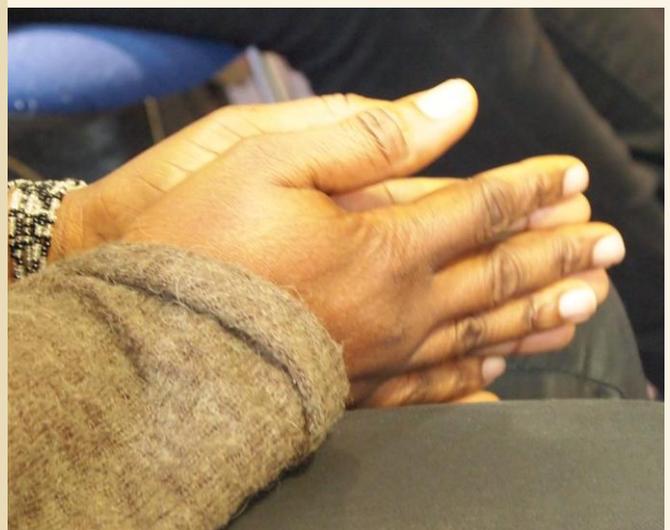
Why have we forsaken them? Why oh Why?

It is more than ever the time to walk alongside the stranger and provide hospitality. Bring calm, security, peace and joy to their lives. It is refreshing to appreciate and enjoy their cultures and different ways of living. It is encouraging to see a person walk with head held high and to have a feeling that their dignity has been restored. Let them receive warmth and love from us. Now is the time to 'entertain angels unawares' (Hebrews 13.2b).

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it.

Hebrews 13:2

I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matthew 25:35)



“in a strange land, separated from loved ones...”

Living, Loving Lord

Living, Loving Lord
we are told that Mary, Joseph and Jesus
travelled
as refugees,
to Egypt.
They were strangers
in a strange land
separated from
loved ones,
their community and
familiar surroundings.

We are told that during his ministry
Jesus surrounded himself with
strangers,
marginalised people and
the outcasts of society.

We remember now
women ...
men ...
children ...
who are separated from their families,
homes
communities
because of
selfishness
broken relationships
greed
hatred
famine
war.

Encourage us,
enable us
to move
out of our comfort,
our complacency and
get alongside the sad
the strangers
who cry out
for understanding
for help
for love.

Motivate us through compassion
to be the prime movers
to bring about
a change in attitudes
in our communities and
to open our homes,
to give shelter
and sanctuary
and no-strings-attached love
to people ... who
need us to be
Christ-like

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“You will have one law for
the stranger and the
citizen.” (Leviticus 24:22)

“let us respect one another”

Lift Up the Other

To be at peace,
Let us respect one another
The only time we must look down on someone
Is when we bend down to lift up the other

Writer Unknown

A sister from the African Continent



“You must love your neighbour as yourself”
(Leviticus 19:18,
quoted in Matthew
22:40)

Who's That

Tinker, tailor, soldier, terrorist,
rich man, poor man, asylum seeker,
refugee,

Who's that trying to cross the border?
Who's that waiting at the door?
Who's that queuing up for visas?
Who's that sleeping on the floor?

Who's that working in the fields?
Who's that counting out the rent?
Who's that dead in a container,
all the family money spent?

Who's that signing a petition?
Who's that spraying 'Go Home'?
Who that moaning about claimants,
while UK tax laws you flout?

Who's that running the soup kitchen?
Who's that challenging the laws?
Who's that welcoming the stranger?
Who's that standing by the poor?

Tinker, tailor, soldier, terrorist,
rich man, poor man, asylum seeker, refugee
Which one could be me?

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“they shared stories of their lives”

They Came for Food

They came for food and friendship.
We shared mince pies, talked together
and caught a glimpse of the
Love of Each Other.

They shared stories of their lives.
We listened to each other
And learn anew of the
Compassion of Humankind.

They presented a challenge.
We talked about ways of living together
and came near the reconciling
Spirit of Justice, Joy and Peace.

*Let us celebrate and share
Love, Compassion and Justice*

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Meeting and Eating

Churches are spaces and places
for contemporary meeting and eating.
So get off your feet,
Wash your neighbour's feet
And make sure there's plenty to eat.

© Janet Lees

Move Out – To Entertain

Loving God
walk with us as we move out from our
security

Compassionate Christ
motivate us to take risks like Jesus

Spirit of God
reassure
renew
recommit us to a life of serving
with no strings attached
where we will live for justice and peace

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The Son of God came to
dwell among us... John
1:14

Homeless in Egypt

When people flee from scenes of war
and carnage,
when people know terror because of
violent rage,
where is the place of sanctuary?

When families are split by conflict,
when wounded victims escape from
bloodshed,
where will they find refuge?

Wounded Healer,
you inspire us to welcome the asylum
seeker,
you encourage us to open our hearts
and homes to the refugee.
When we offer sanctuary to such as
these,
we open the door to the child whose
family fled to Egypt

© John Johansen-Berg

At the Crossroads

At the crossroads, we remember you
Christ,
crucified in a non-place, a rubbish
dump,
jeered at by passing crowds.
At the crossroads, we remember the
world,
So many people trying to find their
place,
excluded, rejected one way or
another.
At the crossroads, we listen
as the sounds of the day come to us,
reminding us that we are not alone.
At the crossroads, we stand with you
Jesus,
and for you; to meet and greet,
accept and include all in your name.

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There Is Much I Would Do

There is much I would do for you, my friend;
But, you see, you are not of my skin.
There is much I could say that would ease
your way
and, although I am blessed with means and
ends,
I must save what I can for my kin.

There is hope I would give if I could, my
friend;
but, you speak a tongue strange to my ear
and, although God above has called me to
love,
I apologise for my hesitant trend
and must love only those I hold dear.

I would help you if I had time, my friend;
but you cannot expect me to alter.
I have worked hard to grab the chances I've
had.
And, although you say you need help to
mend,
It's not my fault your fortune has faltered.

Of course, I will bless you today, my friend;
even though you are not of my race,
I can wish you good speed and direct you to
feed
at the soup kitchen just round the bend.
Yes, I am brimming with Christian grace.

© Duncan L.Tuck

“encourage us
to open our
hearts”

“walking, walking, walking... weary and worn...”

Looking for Hope

Women

Men

Children

Walking, walking, walking.

Weary and worn.

Tears, frustration.

Women

Men

Children

Drowning at sea.

Dying from illness and exhaustion.

Women

Men

Children

Meeting barbed wire fences.

Walls of humanity trying to keep them out.

Refugees and asylum seekers
from war torn

Syria

Strife in

Eritrea

Ethiopia

Afghanistan

Women

Men

Children

Needing love

A smile

A reassuring voice

A meal

A bed

A home

Women

Men

Children

Needing dignity

A family who will show them the way

In a friendly community

Women

Men

Children

Needing

Hope.

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“If one member suffer, we
all suffer together”

1 Corinthians 12:26

“though we travel on different roads, there are no strangers”

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.
Fear on the faces of those women, men and
children.
Frightened by the past, fearful of the future
Will no one understand their pain?
Will anyone 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



“There are no strangers or
sojourners, but fellow
citizens with the saints and
members of the household
of God.” Ephesians 2:19

“a face at my door”

The Refugee

I looked outside this morning.
It gave me quite a shock
to see a face I couldn't place
stand at my door and knock.

I don't go much on strangers.
I'm quite reserved you see.
I like my life, my town, my home
just as they used to be

I've called myself a Christian,
I've led my life with prayer.
I didn't know this would sneak up so
and catch me unaware.

I didn't expect this person
un-fed, un-clothed and poor
to limp their way and wait all day
outside my shut front door.

I do not want to open.
I do not want to share.
I'm well aware of a room that's spare
and I do not want him there.

This is my time of trial.
This is my horrid test.
This is my time for denial –
or loving Jesus best.

I peeped outside at lunchtime,
at times throughout the day
and just before I went to bed.
He hasn't gone away.

© Lucy Berry

Open Door

Who is the stranger at the door,
travel-stained, exhausted,
looking for a place to stay?
Tension is etched into her face,
haunting memories of a shattered home,
of relatives and friends slaughtered.
Come in and welcome;
Let us share together.

Who is the stranger at the door,
knocking without much hope,
yet desperate to enter?
He has been broken by prison,
Spent months in solitude
And fears for his life if he returns.
Come in and welcome;
Let us journey together.

Who is the stranger at the door,
marks of blood on his forehead
and scars on his hands?
His face is somehow familiar;
his eyes reflect sadness,
yet his lips convey a smile.
Come in and welcome;
Let us go forward together.

© John Johansen-Berg

High Season

The toe of Italy
kicks Sicily
deeper into the haze.
Refugees swelter
whilst tourists
soak up the rays.

© Janet Lees

You may like to use the following liturgy in worship. It would be appropriate in a small group or larger congregation.

Refugee and/or Migrant Sunday

Suggested for use on:

**World Day of Refugees and Migrants
(Sunday 17 January 2016)**

Pastoral Suggestion

For the liturgy have flags from the nationalities that make up your community.

Words of Welcome

Spoken by the Worship Leader, a refugee or a migrant

Today we invite everyone to pray for refugees and migrants to our country. Our worship is a celebration of the contribution refugees have made to our community/country whose population has a rich cultural mix. Many of us are refugees or the descendants of refugees, yet in my recent years some refugees have been targeted for abuse because of their country of origin and their beliefs. Sadly, there has developed a division within the community/country about policies on and the treatment of asylum seekers.

Readings

Ecclesiastes 3:17 – 20, 28 -29

By being gentle and humble we will find God's favour.

Responsive Psalm Ps 67: 4 – 7, 10 – 11

This is a hymn of thanksgiving for God's goodness and care for the disadvantaged and poor.

Hebrews 12: 18 – 19, 22 – 24

The new covenant is one of love.

Luke 14: 1, 7 – 14

Jesus invites us to give without seeking return.

A Reflection

Jesus uses a concrete situation to teach about humility and hospitality. God is not selective about who is invited to the table of the kingdom. An attitude of humility, of being receptive to God, will dispose us to act like God. We will recognise our duty to share what we have with the poor.

Places in the feast of the kingdom are for God to give as a free gift, not for us to take for ourselves as our right.

CONTINUED

This teaching from Jesus concerning 'placement at the table' and 'hospitality' emphasizes important issues for us as we learn to live together and build our future together with people who are refugees, migrants and asylum seekers.

The response in the Psalm clearly states that God has prepared a home for the poor. Can we listen to this challenge with the gentleness and humility invited of us in the first reading? Can we respond in the spirit of the new covenant to those seeking a place of safety? What if God has prepared this home for the poor in our community? Can we share our home, our table, without thought of reward?

Prayer of the Faithful

Any or all of the following could be added, keeping in mind the local community

For refugees that God's presence will give comfort in their insecurity and that our efforts will offer hope and bring justice.

Lord, hear us.

For all newcomers who have made this country their home; that they may find here peace, happiness and prosperity and that we may all be enriched by the values, customs and cultures that we share.

Lord, hear us.

For all the people of this country: that we may have tolerance, openness and respect, so that we may welcome the stranger, offer support to those who have recently arrived and give comfort to the homesick.

Lord, hear us.

For all of us: that we may change our way of thinking and be prepared to stop protecting our standard of living at the cost of developing nations and their peoples' quality of life; that we may live simply so that others may simply live.

Lord, hear us.

Notes

Languages - *In many communities there is a range of languages spoken. Some of these could be incorporated into the liturgy, always respecting its structure and balance. A reading could be read in another language and the English translation included in a worship sheet or electronically. Some of the general intercessions could be translated into another language and prayed, so that all are engaged in worship, rather than listening to a concert. Invite the congregation to give the Sign of Peace to each other.*

If this is the only time during the year that migrant groups celebrate their journey and life in the community, it would be appropriate to decorate and highlight the different shrines and statues with which the different groups identify strongly.

Place inserts in the church/area/parish newsletter on the multicultural composition of the local communities with some stories of the experience of migrating, on present refugee questions in the world and on the activity which could be a part of your mission.

© Fr John Murphy

Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office

Australia

(adapted) Permission was requested for use of this piece by email to the above office

This story could be read at various times; in a small group, at appropriate meetings when discussing the migrant situation...

A Kind Thought for Asylum Seekers

In my experience it isn't often that a tolerant, informed, let alone Christian view is expressed about asylum seekers. I have a particular interest in this subject because I married an Iranian asylum seeker, who now has UK citizenship. His father worked hard to improve his family's income and status to the point at which they were able to move from a small, rural village to a more prosperous, middle-class life in Tehran. Here my husband received his university education and after his national service he set up his own pharmaceutical company. At this time in Iran many middle-class families sent their children to Europe to be educated. My husband's eldest sister had four boys, all of whom were educated at private boarding schools in England, thus contributing to our economy. At the time of the revolution she and her husband had to leave Iran because the work they had done in the days of the Shah was no longer acceptable. She moved to England to be with her sons, all of whom have now completed their university education here, hold well-paid jobs and are in no way a drain upon our economy. My husband stayed in Iran, but after a while his loyalty to the new regime was questioned and he was imprisoned and tortured. After his release he managed to arrange a business trip to Europe during which he decided to seek asylum rather than face the frightening prospect of an unknown and potentially dangerous future in his own country. He struggled for years to settle here but could not and has recently returned to Iran. Despite much personal discomfort, I feel compelled to write this story to try to dispel some of the half-truths and myths associated with asylum seekers.

'ALL asylum seekers are spongers'

Whilst it is true that asylum seekers want some things that life in the UK offers – peace, safety and economic stability – all of the Iranians I have met here have been prepared to work hard to achieve these for themselves and would have

preferred to have been able to do this in Iran, without the upheaval and emotional distress of leaving their own country.

Sadly, my marriage failed, 'Well, what did you expect when you married someone like that?' How would YOU feel if you were in my, or my former husband's shoes? He was young and successful and had achieved more than he could ever have imagined. He had, by his own and his family's hard work, moved from a small, rural village to become a dynamic, well-educated and self-reliant businessman in Tehran. Then he became a social outcast in his wife's native land. I try not to be too judgemental when I encounter such hostility but it is hard and painful to bear.

'It's a bad thing to be an economic migrant'
I know that my husband and other members of his family did not leave Iran primarily for economic reasons but I ask you to reflect on the plight of those asylum seekers who do. Can you put your hand on your heart and say that you would not try to get a better life for yourself and your family elsewhere if you were living in grinding poverty as well as under a harsh and oppressive regime?

I am not seeking to make a case for unlimited and unrestricted immigration but merely asking for a more informed and tolerant approach to the many, who like my former husband, are faced with a daily barrage of political and media half-truths, hatred and ostracism, some of which is fuelled by racist attitudes. Such prejudice takes little account of their personal struggles or the important and valuable contribution which they seek to make to the economic, social and cultural life of their adopted country. A kind thought, a word of encouragement to genuine asylum seekers and where appropriate, a word of correction or challenge to those who oppose them would go a long way towards dispelling some of these myths.

It is a sad reflection upon many of the prevailing attitudes towards asylum seekers in our society that the author of these words feels the need to protect her family by preserving her anonymity. Think and pray on these things.

Please feel free to use this liturgy alongside Refugee and/or Migrant Sunday where there is the suggestion for use on World Day of Refugees and Migrants Sunday 17 January 2016

My Church – A Bridge for the Stranger

Leader: We are here to listen and to learn
along with all women and men –
from stories
from situations
from facts and figures
from the voices of people
that cry out for our
attention.

People: **Forgive us, God of all People, for those times when we have chosen not to listen to the voices of women and men and chosen not to listen to their stories.**

Leader: We hear the cries of the people – their cries for dignity, hope, justice and freedom to be.

People: **Forgive us as we, the Church, through our inattention and our fears, have added to their pain and despair of being strangers in an unknown land.**

Leader: When people feel demoralised and desperately afraid through lack of support.

People: **Give us the courage to speak out for them and to give strength to plead for their rights.**

Leader: When hopelessness drowns their dreams and loneliness is their only companion.

People: **May we affirm to those with power and authority the right of women and men to be who they are and to give hope and warmth to these people in their desperate situations.**

Leader: God of all People, empower the Church – the people of God –
to hear
to listen
to act

and to take risks to be the voice of those people whose voices are overpowered by the clamour and hypocrisy of the world around them.

Silence

People : **Loving God, who calls the Church - the People of God – to be the
Church of the Stranger
Enable us to hear
Enable us to listen
Empower us to act**

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Accompany, Serve, Advocate

In accordance with the JRS International Charter, JRS UK accompanies refugees and forced migrants, our brothers and sisters, serving them as companions and advocating their cause in an uncaring world. We have a particular concern for those who are detained under the immigration rules or who are left destitute in the UK. This work is carried out in the spirit of mutual respect, dignity and solidarity with the refugees and in collaboration with other organisations.

“Yes, refugees always hope to find safety and protection. And hope along with faith gives a resilience to people to help them overcome obstacles and dangers.”

Louise Zanré, Director, JRS UK

“When we pray with the refugees in these difficult moments, for them and for us, we consent to the newness of their "being on the move"; and we give thanks to God for the joyful mutual recognition we experience through solidarity and hospitality. Our prayer together is like this flower a refugee offered to a volunteer at the Budapest station: who welcomes is in fact welcomed.” *Jean-Marie Carrière, Director, JRS Europe*

Acknowledgements

The majority of these writings have been selected from two anthologies compiled by Geoffrey Duncan and published by the Canterbury Press. *Shine On, Star of Bethlehem* was first published 2001 and reprinted 2002 followed by a new, enlarged edition 2004. *Entertaining Angels*, was published 2005. A few pieces have been written specially for this publication or other occasions.

Entertaining Angels

- * A Kind Thought for Asylum Seekers - Anonymous
- * Call No One Stranger - © Patricia Mulhall
- * Homeless in Egypt - © John Johansen-Berg
- * Lift Up the Other - Writer Unknown
- * Meeting and Eating - © Janet Lees
- * Move Out – to Entertain - © Geoffrey Duncan
- * My Church – A Bridge for the Stranger - © Geoffrey Duncan
- * Open Door - © John Johansen-Berg
- * There is Much I Would Do - © Duncan L.Tuck
- * They Came for Food - © Geoffrey Duncan (originally They Came to Tea but adapted for this publication)
- * Who's That - © Janet Lees
- * Refugee and/or Migrant Sunday - © Fr John Murphy Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office Australia

Shine On, Star of Bethlehem

- * Living, Loving Lord - © Geoffrey Duncan

Other Occasions

- * At the Crossroads - © Janet Lees
- * High Season - © Janet Lees
- * The Refugee - © Lucy Berry
- * Looking for Hope - © Geoffrey Duncan

We plan to work further on encouraging others to write prayers with and for refugees at JRS UK.

We hope to be able to offer another collection of prayers, poems and reflections in 2016 written by some of the refugees and asylum seekers we accompany here in the UK.

If you would like to be involved in that project in any way, please contact us via uk@jrs.net



If you have enjoyed using these prayers and liturgy and would like to find out more about our work or offer a donation to JRS UK, please go to:
www.jrsuk.net

Thank you

”I believe in you and I know that you are with me everywhere.” *Cecile, who was a member of the JRS UK women’s prayer group*



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