
DREAMING TOGETHER AS ONE HUMAN FAMILY

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In his message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis tells us that “We are called to dream together, fearlessly, as a single human family, as companions on the same journey, as sons and daughters of the same earth that is our common home.” He cites the prophet Joel “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions”. These dreams that we are called to dream together are dreams about the Kingdom of God, about a just and compassionate society.

A couple of things jump out at me about this call.

First, it is crucial for Francis, as for Joel, that we dream *together* – that this is a project that involves everyone. In fact, in the context of a call to an “ever wider *we*”, the act of dreaming about the Kingdom of God is inherently collective. We cannot do it alone. Our dreaming together transcends national and cultural boundaries, and involves those on the margins both in terms of what is dreamed – we see beyond our own borders – and in terms of the *we* that is doing the dreaming – the whole human family, ultimately, dreams together. The act of dreaming together is an affirmation of our kinship. This is a striking message in a global political context where, so often, we are encouraged to pit ‘our’ good against the good of others, of those deemed outsiders, and where refugees and other vulnerable migrants are routinely dehumanised, subjected to cruelty, and excluded.

Second, in being called to dream about the Kingdom of God, we are called to radically reorient our thinking. Francis suggests we should dream “fearlessly”. We are called to expansive vision, vision that is at once more imaginative and more insightful than our present vision. And this is not just a daydream – it is a stretching of our imaginations, so that we can conceive of the Kingdom we are called on to build.

This reminds us of the limitations of our current vision. We see the world now in a distorted way, as though through a glass darkly. We do not find it incongruous that the world is divided into haves and have nots, or that people who arrive at our gates begging for sanctuary may be summarily incarcerated. We struggle to see another way. But by dreaming together we can come to see the world more clearly.

This suggests that part of dreaming together is *seeing each other*, because seeing each other is at the heart of seeing the world. We see God in each other. We are all made in God's image. As Francis has written elsewhere, in the face of our brothers and sisters, we see "the face of God reflected in so many faces". Christian tradition also suggests that we see the face of God, that we see Christ, especially in the most marginalised, in those that we have a tendency to overlook, and outsiders. In migrants and refugees, "the Church contemplates the image of Christ", strangers made welcome.¹

Perhaps the dim, distorted nature of our current perspective has something to do with our isolation, and with the walls we build around ourselves and our societies. We do not see our connection to those beyond our borders, we do not see that migrants and refugees are sisters and brothers, and in that our vision is warped. It also makes it difficult to see anything else. Seeing alone yields a blinkered and partial perspective. We need to learn from each other face-to-face, and so see things as they really are. This understanding is the foundation for dreaming in hope for a better world.

In reflecting on this, I am reminded of interactions I have had with refugees we accompany at JRS UK. I have learnt so much from refugees, both about God and about the world. Sometimes, I have heard something startling, something that has challenged and changed my perspective about reality as well as about hope. Talking together and dreaming together can be mutually transformative – they can be spaces of reciprocal giving. We hope that reciprocity also shapes how we as an organisation do our thinking on the asylum system, and on how it should function within a just and compassionate society. Though we don't always do it perfectly, we start by spending time with refugees, listening, hearing their voices and their views when we want to understand the social and political institutions that affect them, and as we try to think about how the asylum system should be. As we seek to stand in solidarity with refugees, we seek to imagine a future that includes them, and we think about that future together.

These small and imperfect acts of dreaming together are counter-cultural: the asylum system that those we accompany are trapped within too often does not see or hear them, denying them a meaningful chance to tell their stories, let alone to hear their views about how it might be better.

In order to dream about the Kingdom of God, we need to create space for the visions of the most marginalised, in a world where those visions are often blotted out. Only then can our partial view be widened enough to glimpse in the breadth of God's hopes for us.

¹ *Erga Migrantes*, 12 (citing Matthew 25:35).



