

REFUGEES , ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS

Archdiocesan Commission of Caritas Justice & Peace

‘Welcome each other, as Christ welcomed you’ Romans 15:7

At the beginning of 2020 Pope Francis in addressing members of the Diplomatic-Corps accredited to the Holy See talked of the tragedy of internally displaced people as one of the challenges of our contemporary world. Situations of conflict, humanitarian emergencies and climate change are increasing numbers of refugees and migrants and often unseen tragedies like COVID-19 only exaggerate the problem. We are reminded of the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt. The child Jesus experienced with His parents the tragic fate of displaced people and refugees which is marked by fear, uncertainty, hunger and unease. Unfortunately in modern times many families can identify with this sad reality.

In each person forced to flee for safety Jesus is present as he was at the time of Herod. In the faces of the hungry, the naked and destitute refugee and migrant we are called to see the face of Christ who pleads for our help (cf.Mt.25;31-46)

The United Nations ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’(1948; article 14) states that ‘Everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries free from persecution’. This is the bedrock of the ‘New Scots Integration Strategy’(NSIS) and the policies of all organisations working for the welfare of Refugees and Migrants. Article 14 promises to all economic, social, political and civic rights that underpin a life free from want fear, the entitlement of all peoples at all times and in all places.



The City of Glasgow is the headquarters of the government-run ‘Scottish Refugee Council’(SRC) and non-governmental organisations such as the Refugee Survival Trust (RST). SRC, RST and others commit themselves in making article 14 a living reality for all refugees, asylum seekers and migrants but efforts can be hindered by the agonisingly slow process of the immigration system. While the Scottish Government in its NSIS document anticipates refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to ‘live in a safe, welcoming and cohesive communities able to build and pursue full and independent lives from day 1’ the ‘Home Office’ procedures that authorize basic needs as housing, healthcare and education/ employment takes several months and sometimes years. Hence there is need for the Scottish Government and the Home Office to aim at similar outcomes within a specific time frame to give people the right to statutory support.



The Archdiocesan Commission of Caritas, Justice & Peace has a sub-section ‘Refugee, Asylum Seekers and Migrant Working Group’. This group has for its vision ‘to enable our churches and nation to welcome each other through welcoming refugees. This working group of the Caritas Justice and Peace network is committed to:

- Finding ways and means to work with local parishes and other organisations to make life better for refugees asylum seekers and migrants
- To educate ourselves and others about the problems facing displaced people and to communicate accurate information which conveys a positive message of the gift of refugees and migrants to society
- To make links with other voluntary and public organisations with a parallel mission

We invite:

1. **Each parish to consider funding a destitute asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker**, identified via Refugee Survival Trust - <https://www.rst.org.uk/> - and other agencies.
2. **Parishes that wish to offer a welcome to a refugee family** to register with the Community Sponsorship programme, which can assist with the whole resettlement process. See <https://www.sponsorrefugees.org/> ; <https://resetuk.org/> in east London - or Welcome Churches (for Christian communities particular) <https://welcomechurches.org/churches/projects/>

3. **Each parish** to publicise and take part in a **Befriending programme**.

Parishes that run soup kitchens, food banks and clothes distribution programmes could combine them with regular meet-up sessions, for conversation and language development. Other opportunities are offered by:

The **Welcoming** provides an online befriending programme: contact Life for further details Life@thewelcoming.org

The Refugee Survival Trust befriending programme could be extended to the Edinburgh Archdiocese.

4. The **St. Vincent dePaul volunteers** in each parish to look out for asylum seekers in need, and to invite them into parish events, and into the online befriending programme at Life@thewelcoming.org
5. Parishes to join local networks to show their support for refugees, viz the **New Scots Connect Map and Forum**. <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/location/> <https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/communities/new-scots-connect/>

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