

The Refugee Crisis

Prayers and Readings

Introduction

Our awareness of the plight of refugees has grown in recent weeks with the influx of people trying to reach Europe from the Middle East, parts of Africa and places such as Afghanistan. A third of these refugees have fled Syria where 12.2 million people have been forced from their homes, 4 million of them fleeing to other countries.

A refugee is recognised in international law as someone forced out of their home country against their will. Around the world there are some 19 million refugees fleeing from many conflicts - from Honduras to Nigeria to Myanmar – overall the largest movement of refugees since the end of World War 2.

Refugees suffer in multiple ways

- ^ from the persecution which forces them to flee
- ^ living in camps which are cramped & unsafe with few prospects for work or education – with families often stuck in limbo for generations
- ^ when they decide to move on, from dangerous journeys, often in the hands of people traffickers,
- ^ once they reach their chosen destination from the experience of living in camps or sleeping rough, of living in fear of deportation and of facing a hostile reception in the host country.

Many poorer countries on the borders of conflict areas themselves face great difficulty in coping with large number of refugees. In the current crisis Turkey and Lebanon are examples.

The international community as a whole lacks adequate and effective arrangements for helping refugees and many wealthier countries are unwilling to open their borders and receive refugees because of concerns that this will adversely affect their economic position and change their culture.

In prayer and reflection we bring this difficult and tangled crisis and all those caught up in it, into the presence of the Lord.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father hear the cries of the refugees; grant generosity of spirit to communities faced with an influx of refugees; and guide political leaders to find just and effective ways of dealing with the crisis.

A Reading from the book of Exodus

When Pharaoh had let the people go God led the people by the roundabout way of the wilderness to the Sea of Reeds..... The Lord went before them, by day in the form of a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in the form of a pillar of fire to light them : thus they could continue their march by day and by night. The pillar of cloud never failed to go before the people during the day, nor the pillar of fire during the night.

The word of the Lord

Prayer

God of all humanity

When your people were enslaved and displaced, you led them to a land that they could call home;

When your people were in exile, you promised that one day, they would live in a land of plenty.

When your disciples were afraid and uncertain, you spoke of your Father's house with places prepared for them.

(All respond)

We pray for all those who have no place to call home for those who are without refuge.

Where shelter is ours to offer

grant us the will and resolve to show forth your generosity.

May our cry for justice never falter.

May self-interest and economic gain never deflect us from the ways of your Kingdom.

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

A Reading from the Gospel of St Matthew

The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you fled the wrath of Herod.

Be with those who have to flee the injustice of others.

Lord Jesus, you had nowhere to lay your head.

Be with those who have no land to call their own.

(All respond)

Almighty and merciful God, whose Son became a refugee, look with mercy on those who are fleeing from danger. Bless those who work to bring them relief; inspire generosity and compassion in all our hearts; and guide the nations of the world towards that day when we will all rejoice in your Kingdom of justice and peace. We make our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings from the book of Deuteronomy and Paul's letter to the Hebrews

God it is who sees justice done for the orphan and the widow, who loves the stranger and gives him food and clothing. Love the stranger then, for you were once strangers in Egypt.

Continue to love each other like brothers, and remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

The Word of the Lord

Prayer

Jesus, friend and brother, you know what it is to be hungry and thirsty.

You know the plight of the stranger who faces hostility.

You know the suffering of those who have lost everything.

Help us, who are the privileged inn-keepers of our day, to find room for those driven from their homelands; and in our actions help us to draw closer to you. Amen.

(Pause for reflection)

We draw all our concerns together in prayers of intercession knowing that Our Heavenly Father hears our cries and our longing for peace and justice for all people.

We pray for refugees and other displaced people who have been forced from their homes by conflict. May they find places of welcome and safety. Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the people and the lands from which the refugees have fled that justice and lasting peace may return. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for refugees living in overcrowded camps or living rough - especially children, the sick and the old. Many they find sanctuary. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer**

We pray for relief workers, aid agencies and ordinary citizens trying to alleviate the great suffering evident in the crisis. Grant them the strength and generosity to continue their work.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for the United Nations and political leaders. Grant them the wisdom and the vision to find solutions to the crisis, solutions which meet both the immediate and the long-term needs of the refugees. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray that as a nation we may be generous in the welcome and support we give to refugees who reach our shores. May we see in them your suffering face. Lord in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.

We pause for a few moments to bring our individual prayers to the Lord – sharing them out loud if you wish to do so.

We ask Mary Our Mother to join her prayers to ours as we say **Hail Mary**

We say together words of blessing

May the Grace of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all and with those we have prayed for, now and for evermore. Amen

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