

Reflections from the Underside:

“Take a dustbin—a garbage can
Inside are the people

The Lid which keeps the people inside
Is composed of immigration, the offices
of bureaucrats, civil servants who
administer the system and the Houses
of God that have lost the meaning of
fellowship.

And inside the dustbin, so that it doesn't
explode, there are little compartments
dividing people up, so they can't “ferment”
and lift the lid of the dustbin.

What we have to do is work at how to make the
people ferment and push up the lid of the
dustbin.

(Anon)

1. Finding Sanctuary:

Mounting tension between the powers for world domination and the regimes of countries that have failed to serve their people only to strip them of their wealth with incursions, now the war against terror deeper and deeper into the third world are driving ever increasing numbers of people from their homes and their countries, Ironically many seek refugee in the West, however new restrictions and border controls, mean that they flee to nearing Borders. The role of politics, inequality and poverty is the major cause of the exodus. Recent refugees/migrants are broadly speaking of two distinct types. those that have been thrown up by the ideologies of the

cold war and those that have fallen victims to the politics of power and greed.

More often those fleeing enter countries illegally and their pursuit is relentless. Capture can lead to deportation back to the countries of origin. Among these are people who fled persecution because of their political or religious convictions. Their return inevitably can lead to prosecution, detention and even torture.

However a large number of these new arrivals, often described as economic migrants, face hostility with a fair amount of hardship and destitution.

It is in this sector that religious groups, individuals of their own faith and conviction offer their comfort and support, in some cases providing underground support, to which the State see's as illegal, like Sanctuary .as keeping people illegally.

The Underground Railroad, an old USA support network exists today in a number of countries, working to hide and support Refugees and Migrants. The Refugee and Migrant Forum runs a number of these networks in Europe and in Africa, also in the Asian countries. The churches both as Institutions and through Individual members play a key role as sponsors and supporters.

The Refugee and Migrant Forum does not to seek publicity. Its activities are run quietly, discreetly and in an organised manner.

The Bible provides references of people who were given refugee. There are also examples of those who lost their lives in offering protection and sanctuary. Often Jesus Christ is quoted is Africa's significant refugee

MIGRATION:

Migration was welcomed in Europe. It was a source for cheap labour, and essential for rebuilding the economy especially

after the war. Movement from the Eastern block was controlled. In recent years through the enlargement of the European Union, new migrants from the east European region, has effectively led to the restriction or cessation of movement from the Third world countries, of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean. Britain is imposing controls on the flow of migrants from newer members of the EU like Bulgaria and Romania.

Entry into Europe from numerous third world countries has become increasingly difficult and virtually impossible due to severe controls. Obtaining visas has become an impossibility thereby drastically reducing a normal flow of entry.

There is desperation and the temptation to travel to forbidden but “greener” pastures at all costs.

Consequently there are desperate attempts to reach richer countries through illicit means. These prospective new arrivals take risks climbing onto boats and fleeing countries for a new start, in Europe, sometimes resulting in loss of lives.

Unscrupulous hard line and rapacious gangsters, involved in Human trafficking, reap benefits from this traffic.

The Refugee Forum International recently brought the plight of fleeing migrants on boats to the attention of the media, which exposed these harsh conditions/.

Immigration is a political hot potato. Strong feelings are expressed on both sides. It is a selling point for some groups in the media. Coupled with emotions round the war on terror, it hampers help need by migrants. They become targets of xenophobia and racism.

A group of refugees fleeing from poverty, hoping to make a better life, were stranded when they were left at sea. They managed after over several hundred miles to see a fishing

trawler and hag on to its fishing net cast, eventually got assistance from the Italian Coastguard who brought them ashore. Their journey is a tribute to the many who never made it. When interviewed, they all expressed, that they prayed on their plight and said that it was God who delivered them. They remembered the name of Jesus, when facing the prospect of drowning, and as one by one perished, it was the word of Jesus that kept them alive. Nobody knew how to swim; only God could help us, only God they said. It is this faith to the end that brought them to safety. Their testimony, has now enriched the catholic communities, in the town where the refugees were hospitalised. And it turns, the church has become alive, after experiencing a fall in attendance and neglect. The churches are full; calling the rescue of this refugee's a miracle.

Migration is about people, People are about the world we live in and people are life. It is the mission of God to proclaim life. It is about obedience. It is an obedience which has everything to do with listening. We have to listen to those that have suffered, in police stations, fleeing for their lives those who have disappeared, and those who come to our shores, seeking God's will for Love, charity and above all justice. And in Listening, we hear the angry cry of God himself.

**“ And the people of Israel groaned under their bondage
And cried out for help, and their cry under bondage came up to God, and God heard their groaning, and God remembered their covenant with Abraham, with Isaac and with Jacob, and God saw the people of Israel and God knew their condition”**

Exodus 2: 23-25

And so we have to find God in the anguish cries of the suffering people, we have reread his word and his word is the word of life, we live and practice it. So when we see migration and see those that suffer to reach the destiny, in God's world, who are we to say no you do not belong here or there. . So we assist them, as we

proclaim Gods word, we fight for it, and even die for it,so that life not death prevails.

Migration is today a political game, run by Government and its officers, they choose and pick whom and when. The rich move freely, unlike those that are poor, because the rich create wealth For themselves and get preferential treatment.

It is political The Globalisation of migration is one of the key impacts on the movement of Refugees and Migrants in our world today.

COMMUNIYTY AND CHURCHES:

One thing that comes very strongly for Migrant and Refugee Communities, that have first hand experience and they know about survival, as to put it they are carrying the cross is the absolute necessity and importance of linkages and mutual cooperation. Quite often others seem to write the script and then call these people to act. It should be the other way round. These communities have different levels of struggle and organisations that can help each other Therefore resources should be given and partnership developed so that the community should not go through the same process separately and rediscover everything as if no one had done it before.

- At more local levels the church. Its people should be involved in campaigns to help save the lives of Migrants and refugee.**
- Examining policies that are appropriate is a matter for Christian concern. To deal with these issues we need to base our tenets on the Foundation of Christian doctrine.**

The starting base should be the belief of “one people” that is to say one people of God/ Christians acknowledge God as creator and in doing so recognise that Gods creativity was directed

towards that one people, this is the whole of humanity and not many.

The Old Testament tells a story of a particular people and their dealings with God (but also emphasising the God of nations). It begins with the creation of life all things including humanity in the formation of one man and one woman. This story affirms one human stock not many.

When we turn to the church, we find that the primary image of the church is the body of Christ and the people of God. Both are images of organic and living things, not of something static. The people of God must compass the diversity of humankind. In all of this the church is called to be the sign of his kingdom. The great traditions of Christianity is to provide a basis for condemning the situation in which a people are divided, and have to struggle for conditions in which they may live together for Peace and Justice.

The Bible provides many images of Migration. It narrates the journey of Abraham, its first migrant. It tells the story of the great migration of the People of Israel from Egypt. It speaks of the plight of the holy family and its periods of exile in Egypt. It encounters the deportation of leaders of Israel and their captivity in Babylon. It describes the travels of Paul in spreading the word of Christianity. The images of Exodus, Exile, Captivity and Pilgrimage have a link in the Church the role of the pilgrimage and the people of Exodus can be seen as the Immigrant/Migrant Church of today/

Even the prophets would have harsh words to those that trample on the needy (Amos) against legislators for infamous laws (Isaiah) against the person that makes men work for nothing (Jeremiah) against those that loathe justice. So if the law of the Old Testament and Jesus uphold the claim of the downtrodden, so then could the Church and Christians of today.

Jesus also disregarded the tribal and traditional methods, The Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, so he told the story of the Good Samaritan, and offered the water of salvation to the Samaritan at the well of Jacob.

Today, we encounter the Christ in the migrant, in those that flee, fall foul of Immigration policies and those that suffer hardship and indignity at the hands of controls. When we leave them isolated, their lives threatened, is the same as leaving Christ isolated and insecure.

Our life and belief in God leads us to ensure that everyone has the right of the need to value as human beings, and to work to ensure that they have the right to peaceful, fulfilled life. The biblical teachings of the Bible demand that we stand steadfast with the Migrant. We are demanded to see the Christ in them

CONCLUSION

Migration, Sanctuary, the role of Communities and Churches is a very important debate, in the process of globalisation. The quantum leap figures that we all take a search in our faith and ensure that justice is proclaimed. There is no more time of asking how, but when. This is the new call for action.

FURTHER THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS CAN BE FOUND AS FOLLOWS:

***Acts 22:2**

1 do not mistreat an alien or oppress him for you were aliens in EGYPT

***Lev 19:34**

The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born/ Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God

***Lev25; 35**

If one of your countryman is poor and is unable to support himself among you help him as you would an alien or temporary resident, so we can continue to live along among you.

***DT 27:19**

Cursed is the man withhold Justice from the alien, fatherless or the widow Then all the people shall say Amen

DT 31:12

Assemble the people, women and children, and the aliens living in your town, so they can listen and fear the Lord your God and follow carefully all the words of this law

\Mt 25: 35 For I was hungry and you gave me somatic g to eat was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. Was estranger and you invited me in.

END