

## **WELCOMING THE STRANGER**

= **LOVING OUR NEIGHBOUR**

### Introduction

This paper was prepared in 2009 for the Hallam Justice & Peace Commission's autumn conference on the theme, *The Changing Face of Britain*. Its re-issue is to help remind us of why we should support the stranger in need and that by welcoming one we are also loving our neighbour. The paper is a compilation of teaching from Scripture and Catholic social doctrine and may be used for preparing liturgies and workshops in support of refugees and asylum seekers. It is not a definitive piece of work as it will have omitted and overlooked other references, and, indeed, may require updating from other sources since 2009. The paper is in two parts:

1. Scriptural Background and
2. Catholic Social Teaching.

Where possible, a commentary is provided.

### **1. Scriptural Background**

Don't ill-treat any foreigners who live in your land. Instead, treat them as well as you treat citizens and love them as much as you love yourself. Remember, you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

**(Leviticus 19: 33-34)**

*In regard to charity and justice, respect was to be shown the members of the community, and all attitudes of economic superiority were to be avoided with dependent foreigners, who could not possess land and had no clan ties. (NJBC, p.74)*

*.....these are what we might call civil law, but here they are given a religious sanction and thus brought under cultic law. (Oxford)*

[The Lord] cares for foreigners and gives them food and clothing. And you should also care for them, because you were foreigners in Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 10: 18-19)**

Moses said: When runaway slaves from other countries come to Israel and ask for protection, you must not hand them back to their owners. Instead, you must let them choose which one of your towns they want to live in. Don't be cruel to runaway slaves.

**(Deuteronomy 23: 15-16)**

*If a political dimension should be implied here, the law overturns provisions such as are known from an Aramaic treatise of the eighth century BCE which specifies that a fugitive must be returned. (Oxford, p. 150)*

At the time there were  
only a few of us,  
and we were homeless.  
We wandered from nation to nation,  
from one country to another.  
God did not let anyone  
ill-treat our people.  
Instead he protected us  
by punishing rulers  
And telling them,  
“Don’t touch my chosen leaders  
or harm my prophets!”

**(1 Chronicles 16: 19-22)**

Haman went to the king and said, “Your Majesty, there are some people who live all over your kingdom and won’t have a thing to do with anyone else. They have customs that are different from everyone else. They have customs that are different from everyone else’s, and they refuse to obey your laws. We would be better off to get rid of them! Why not give orders for all of them to be killed? I can promise that you will get a great deal of silver for your treasury.”

**(Esther 3: 8-9)**

*The Jews are indicted because they are perceived as unassailable and disobedient.*  
(NJBC, p.578)

*Complaints of this kind against the Jews are found in several documents of the Hellenistic period.* (NJB Study Edition)

If a messenger comes  
from a distant nation,  
you must say:  
“The Lord built Zion.  
Even the poorest of his people  
will find safety there”.

**(Isaiah 14: 32)**

Hide our refugees!  
Don’t turn them away.  
Let our people live  
in your country  
and find safety here.  
**(Isaiah 16: 3-4 - More trouble for Moab)**

*The Moabite refugees send an embassy to Jerusalem, asking for sanctuary for the fugitives.....* (NJBC)

*This relates to the Moabite fugitives' petition to be granted asylum in Judah. (NJB Study Edition)*

You have a place of safety  
for the poor and needy  
in times of trouble.  
Brutal enemies pounded us  
like a heavy rain  
or the heat of the sun at midday  
but you were our shelter.  
**(Isaiah 25: 4)**

Don't ill-treat others  
or falsely accuse them  
or say something cruel.  
**(Isaiah 58: 9)**

*Nations come to Jerusalem to rebuild the city, including people from the Arabian Peninsula associated with Abraham. One day all nations will become God's children through faith. (NJBC)*

*.....it is clear that it is the upper strata of society who are being addressed; those who have bread and a house, as against the hungry and the homeless poor. (Oxford)*

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. This is the first and most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like this one. And it is 'Love others as much as yourself'. All the Laws of Moses and the Books of the Prophets are based on these two commandments.  
**(Matthew 22: 37-40; cf. Mark 12: 29ff and Luke 10: 25ff)**

*Jesus sees the law as a unified whole. From the love of God all other laws can be derived and supported. (NJBC)*

When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.....  
.....Whenever you failed to help any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you failed to do it for me.  
**(Matthew 25: 35ff)**

*This much-loved text presents a practical religion of deeds of loving-kindness, love of neighbour. (NJBC)*

*Who are these people in whom lurks the Son of Man? It is tempting to answer, All who are in need. (Harvey)*

*People are judged by their works of mercy. This is also about the profession of faith. (NJB Study Edition)*

God said that Abraham's descendants would live for a while in a foreign land and would be ill-treated four hundred years. But he also said, "I will punish the nation that makes them slaves...."

**(Acts 7:6-7)**

Take care of God's needy people and welcome strangers into your home.

**(Romans 12: 13)**

*This may imply that Paul is hinting to the Roman Christians that they should be thinking about helping the Jerusalem Christian community with alms. (NJBC)*

Encourage anyone who feels left out, help all who are weak, and be patient with everyone.

**(1 Thessalonians 5: 14)**

## **2. Catholic Social Teaching**

*The Church's social teaching (or doctrine) comes principally in the form of an encyclical. Put simply, it is like a circular letter which is issued by a pope - or under his authority - to relate to, or explain, certain matters of concern, e.g., morality, doctrine, discipline. The so-called social encyclicals are related specifically to justice, human rights and peace.*

### **MATER ET MAGISTRA**

Christianity and Social Justice: a re-evaluation of the social question in the light of Christian teaching by Pope John XXIII, 1961

*This is a celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Rerum Novarum (Of New Things on the Condition of Workers, 1891). It is a re-evaluation of social teaching, examining further the State's role in national policy-making and the part played by major companies. Pope John XXIII examined with optimism the way in which people could co-operate at all levels of society.*

Hornsby-Smith, writing in *An Introduction to Catholic Social Thought*:

*"In Mater et Magistra Pope John XXIII in 1961 insisted on 'the right of the family to migrate' (45)".*

### **GAUDIUM ET SPES**

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World by the Second Vatican Council, 1965

*This not a papal encyclical; it is the concluding document of the Council, drawing together the opinions of the majority of the Church's Bishops. Highlighting the 'signs*

*of the times', the document covers a wide range of important issues relating to peace, justice, human dignity, and responsibility.*

It is....noteworthy how many people are being induced to migrate on various counts, and are thereby changing their manner of life. (6.3)

Justice and equity....require that the mobility which is necessary in a developing economy be regulated in such a way as to keep the life of individuals and their families from becoming insecure or and precarious. When workers come from another country or district and contribute to the economic advancement of a nation or region by their labour, all discrimination as regard wages and working conditions must be carefully avoided. All the people, moreover, above all the local authorities, must treat them not as mere tools of production but as persons, and must help them to bring their families to live with them and to provide themselves with a decent dwelling; they must also see to it that these workers are incorporated into the social life of the country or region that receives them. Employment opportunities, however, should be created in their own areas as far as possible. (66.1)

....organisations of the international community must make provision....to alleviate the distressing conditions in which refugees dispersed throughout the world find themselves, or also to assist migrants and their families. (84.1)

#### POPULORUM PROGRESSIO

Fostering the Development of Peoples by Pope Paul VI, 1967

*Generally regarded as one of the great encyclicals, it calls for a change in the balance of relationships between rich and poor nations. Pope Paul VI stressed that civil progress and economic development are the only means towards world peace.*

Emigrant worker should....be given a warm welcome. Their living conditions are often inhuman, and they must scrimp on their earnings in order to send help to their families who have remained behind in their native land in poverty. (69)

#### JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

A Statement of the Synod of Bishops, 1971

*One of the results of the Second Vatican Council was a series of synods, and from the third synod came this powerful statement about the Church's involvement in the world. Justice had to be witnessed by the Church through its own lifestyle and activities.*

Take....the case of migrants. They are often faced to leave their own country to find work, but frequently find the doors closed in their faces because of discriminatory attitudes, or, if they can enter, they are often obliged to lead an insecure life or are treated in an inhuman manner. The same is true of groups that are less well off on the social ladder such as workers and especially farm workers who play a very great part in the process of development. (21)

To be especially lamented is the condition of so many millions of refugees and of every group of people suffering persecution - sometimes in institutionalised form - for racial or ethnic origin or on tribal grounds. This persecution on tribal grounds can at times take on the characteristics of genocide. (22)

#### OCTAGESIMO ADVENIENS

A Call to Action, marking the eightieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum by Pope Paul VI, 1971

*Pope Paul urged greater efforts for justice and raised a number of new social problems arising from urbanisation. He addressed the concerns of women, youth and the 'new poor', and he encouraged Christians to respond to these new issues of injustice.*

We are thinking.....of the precarious situation of a great number of emigrant workers whose condition as foreigners makes it all the more difficult for them to make any sort of social vindication, in spite of their real participation in the economic effort of the country that receives them. It is urgently necessary for people to go beyond a narrowly nationalistic attitude in their regard and to give them a charter which will assure them a right to emigrate, favour their integration, facilitate their professional advancement and give them access to decent housing where, if such is the case, their families can join them. (17)

Linked to this category are the people who, to find work, or to escape a disaster or a hostile climate, leave their regions and find themselves without roots among their people. (17.1)

#### SOLLICITUDO REI SOCIALIS

The Social Concerns of the Church on the twentieth anniversary of Populorum Progressio by Pope John Paul II, 1987

*Wide-ranging in scope, it addresses such matters as ecology, homelessness, employment, and international trade. Pope John Paul was critical of both capitalism and collectivism - and the confrontation this had created. He called for solidarity and an option for the poor.*

The consequences of [the arms trade] are to be seen in the festering of a wound which typifies and reveals the imbalances and conflicts of the modern world: the millions of refugees whom war, natural calamities, persecution and discrimination of every kind have deprived of home, employment, family and homeland. The tragedy of these multitudes is reflected in the hopeless faces of men, women and children who can no longer find a home in a divided and inhospitable world. (24.3)

#### LABOREM EXERCENS

On Human Work on the ninetieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum by Pope John Paul II, 1981

*In a presentation of philosophy and theology of work Pope John Paul placed human dignity at the heart of the workplace and defined a spirituality of work. Human work has an ethical value of its own, linked to the fact that the one who carries it out is a person.*

Man has the right to leave his native land for various motives - and also the right to return - in order to seek better conditions of life in another country. (23)

[Paragraphs 23, 23.1 and 23.2 state in more detail the Church's teaching.]

Hornsby-Smith:

“Pope John Paul II reiterated previous teaching but considered emigration in search of work in a wider context, stressing the loss to the sending country often of its youngest and most active or intelligent people. In other words he recognised a ‘brain and energy drain’. He insisted that legislation should be enacted to ensure that permanent or seasonal workers were not subject to ‘financial or social exploitation’. (p.137)

CARITAS IN VERITATE

On Integral Human Development by Pope Benedict XVI, 2009

*This is the first social encyclical by Benedict XVI in which he responds to many pressing concerns of today's world and he explores new problems and opportunities brought about by globalisation.*

[An] aspect of integral human development that is worthy of attention is the phenomenon of *migration* .....a social phenomenon of epoch-making proportions that requires bold, forward-looking policies of international co-operation if it is to be handled correctly.

.....there is no doubt that foreign workers, despite many difficulties concerning integration, make a significant contribution to the economic development of the host country through their labour..... Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance. (62)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Immigration and work

Immigration can be a resource for development rather than an obstacle to it.....

.....immigrants fill a labour need which would otherwise remain unfilled in sectors and territories where the local workforce is insufficient or unwilling to engage in the work in question. (297)

Institutions in host countries must keep careful watch to prevent the spread of the temptation to exploit foreign labourers, denying them the same rights enjoyed by nationals, rights that are to be guaranteed to all without discrimination.

(cf. Pope John Paul II, Message for the 2001 World Day of Peace) (298)

#### The duty to protect the innocent

The principle of humanity inscribed in the conscience of every person and all peoples includes the obligation to protect civil populations from the effects of war.

A particular category of war victim is formed by *refugees*, forced by combat to flee the places where they habitually live and to seek refuge in other countries. The Church is close to them not only for her pastoral presence and material support, but also with her commitment to defend their human dignity.

(cf. Pope John Paul II, 1990, Message for Lent) (505)

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#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & BIBLIOGRAPHY

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