

# LOVE THE STRANGER

A Catholic Response to Migrants and Refugees



**Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales**

Department for International Affairs





# Foreword

Bishop Declan Lang, Chair of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Department for International Affairs, and Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees.

***"Every migrant has a name,  
a face, and a story"***

**Pope Francis**

Scripture tells us: "Love the stranger then, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 10:19). The word 'stranger' is variously translated as 'foreigner', 'immigrant', 'sojourner' or 'alien'. However, the message remains consistent: those arriving from other parts of the world are our sisters and brothers. We are called to see Christ in them, for all people are created in His image. And we are called to see ourselves in them, for we all share this common humanity.

In 2023, people making dangerous journeys across the Channel to reach the UK are also called by various names: 'refugees', 'asylum seekers', 'migrants', and often by more derogatory terms.

This publication by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales Department for International Affairs is shaped by, and articulates, our Christian duty to look beyond such labels and see the person who has left their homeland in search of a better life.

When two-year-old Alan Kurdi died in the Mediterranean Sea, for a brief time politicians, journalists, and members of the public across Europe turned their attention to a person with a name and a story. Yet in the years since, how many have died in our own waters without their names or stories ever being known? We should not reduce people to statistics or to a political problem to be solved. Nor can we allow recognition of people's dignity to be dependent upon where they come from or how they reach our shores. The call to love in Deuteronomy is unequivocal and indiscriminate.

Such love, of course, goes beyond mere tolerance. Pope Francis reminds us that loving as Christ does means actively putting ourselves at the service of others. The Catholic community in England and Wales is living this out every day: our charities are caring for people in the asylum system, our parishes are welcoming families through community sponsorship, our aid agencies are providing life-saving assistance to displaced people across the world, and countless volunteers are bearing witness to Christ's love in settings from beachfronts to detention centres. We hope that *Love the Stranger* will support and invigorate this work, for it is not an optional extra but a genuine manifestation of our faith.

As the document makes clear, loving those who seek a home here also means appreciating the fullness of their humanity. Our countries are always better off for the presence of people born elsewhere, who bring their own talents, cultures, and knowledge. Catholic parishes and schools are a microcosm of this as they have been enriched by the presence of families from all over the world. *Love the Stranger* challenges us to not only help those who come here, but also to facilitate and rejoice in their service to our society.

Papal encyclicals and other documents that have been drawn upon highlight the depth of Catholic social teaching in this area. This should guide our response to people who have left their homelands to come to this country. We encourage all Catholics to reflect upon how we can apply this in our own lives, as well as in our parishes, schools, and public life. In doing so each one of us may fulfil our obligation and set an example to others of loving the stranger in the way that God intends.

As we discern this, we ask for the intercession of the patron saints of migrants, and of victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.

St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, pray for us.

St. Josephine Bakhita, pray for us.



### **Bishop Declan Lang**

Chair, Department for International Affairs  
*Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*



### **Bishop Paul McAleenan**

Lead Bishop for Migrants and Refugees  
*Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales*





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Bishop Paul McAleenan

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*“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:19).



## Summary of principles

1. Our response to migrants and refugees is rooted in the innate worth of each human person
2. Recognising the universal destination of goods, we must not exclude others from having the means to flourish simply because of where they were born
3. Nationalist or individualistic tendencies should not be allowed to take hold and prevent us seeing humanity as a single family
4. We recognise the right of all people to flourish in their homeland; every nation has a duty to uphold this by working for peace, promoting good governance and tackling the causes of poverty
5. We ask our own government to help other countries address the factors that drive people from their homelands, including through the provision of a just aid budget, control of the arms trade, promotion of human rights and action to tackle the climate emergency
6. We affirm the responsibility of the Church and civil society to help people in their homelands, including through the work of organisations such as CAFOD, Missio, Pax Christi, and Aid to the Church in Need
7. We uphold the right to migrate, which may be exercised not only by those fleeing threats to their safety but also by those seeking to build a better life for themselves and their families
8. We recognise that states have a right to control their borders; however, such measures cannot be based on economic factors alone; states have a responsibility to promote the common good of the people within their boundaries, but they also have obligations to the wider world
9. We encourage the extension of safe routes such as resettlement programmes, visa schemes and humanitarian corridors, so that people can exercise their right to migrate in a dignified and humane manner
10. We must not allow the concerns that some communities might have about migration to be exploited for political purposes or allow such concerns to develop into a xenophobic attitude; Christian communities must play their part in providing a genuine welcome to migrants and refugees





11. We seek and promote dialogue with the local Church in people's countries of origin, and the countries through which they have travelled, so that we can better understand their stories
12. We defend the fundamental human dignity of all migrants and refugees, regardless of their legal status, including through policies providing access to decent accommodation, healthcare, and childhood education, as well as facilitating family reunification
13. We call for the sanctity of life to be prioritised in all border security arrangements and reject measures that place people in danger or deny reasonable assistance to those in need
14. We call upon the government to avoid the use of immigration detention, arbitrary expulsion and other practices which violate human dignity
15. We urge the fulfilment of obligations under international frameworks protecting migrants and refugees, such as the Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Global Compact on Refugees, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
16. Recognising the practical contribution that our Church can make, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as Caritas, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and the St Vincent De Paul Society, as well as parish and diocesan initiatives, in upholding the human dignity of migrants and refugees
17. Reaffirming the Church's responsibility to help eliminate the evils of trafficking and slavery, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as the Santa Marta Group
18. We recognise that trafficking and slavery are exacerbated by a lack of accessible alternatives for migration or seeking sanctuary - efforts to tackle trafficking and slavery must therefore go beyond more active law enforcement; we also need to support people to flourish in their homelands, establish more safe routes for migrants and refugees, and work to eliminate the demand for those services that slave labour continues to meet
19. Migration enriches our culture - we must welcome migrants and refugees so that they can live fulfilled lives in their new country
20. We support the simplification of routes to citizenship and opportunities for people to regularise their immigration status



21. We celebrate the vital contribution of migrants and refugees to our parishes and the life of the Church in England and Wales
22. We recognise the gifts that migrants and refugees bring which can enrich our society in many ways, including economically
23. We encourage policies that give migrants and refugees the right to work, to facilitate their contribution to the common good of our society
24. We call upon all those who employ migrants and refugees to treat them in a dignified and humane way





# I. Introduction

Why caring for people on the move is an integral part of how we live out our faith.



Caring for people on the move has always been an important aspect of how we live out our faith. As Pope Pius XII reflected in *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*: “there never has been a period during which the Church has not been active on behalf of migrants, exiles and refugees.”<sup>1</sup> Today there are over 280 million migrants and refugees worldwide,<sup>2</sup> more than at any point in history. Quoting the Gospel of St. Matthew, Pope Francis calls on us to respond by welcoming, protecting, promoting, and integrating people, with the reminder that: “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35–43).”<sup>3</sup>

This document outlines Catholic social teaching on migrants and refugees. It then draws upon that teaching to highlight some specific principles that the Church in England and Wales can apply when engaging with the contemporary political and social context. It is intended to complement the documents produced by the Vatican Migrants and Refugees Section for use by the Universal Church, including the pastoral action points on responding to migrants and refugees, as well as the pastoral orientations on refugees and forcibly displaced



persons, human trafficking, internally displaced people, climate displaced people, and intercultural migrant ministry.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout, the document is rooted in our calling to uphold the sanctity of life and human dignity. This was reflected by the Bishops of England and Wales in our resolution on migrants and refugees in May 2022, which emphasised the “fundamental principle of the dignity of every person, created in the image and likeness of God.”<sup>5</sup>

We are publishing *Love the Stranger* at a time when these issues are once again being discussed widely in the political sphere and in the media. It offers a framework which we hope will help those involved in politics, including voters, as they consider public policy. Of course, our response to migrants and refugees is not solely a question of policy. It is incumbent on all individuals and institutions to welcome those who come to our country.

Because of our particular history, the Catholic Church in England and Wales has been greatly enriched by those migrating from other countries throughout the ages, and it is a blessing that this process of enrichment has continued in recent years. It is intended that this document will assist our local churches in the process of walking together as one, therefore adding to the significance of our participation in the Universal Church’s synodal process.





## II. A global perspective

Understanding the universal context of Catholic social teaching on migrants and refugees.



Pope Francis's encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, published in 2020, establishes the universal context which should underpin our response to migrants and refugees. It expresses the need to “acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives.”<sup>6</sup> These sentiments are developed through Pope Francis's reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan and Jesus' call for us not to decide who is close enough to be our neighbour, but rather to actively become neighbours to all. To illustrate this point, Pope Francis uses the example of environmental measures undertaken locally for the sake of humanity as a whole and proposes that “the same attitude is demanded if we are to recognize the rights of all people, even those born beyond our own borders.”<sup>7</sup>

In doing so Pope Francis builds upon the long-established principle in Catholic social teaching that we form one human family transcending states and nationalities. As the Bishops of England and Wales emphasised in *The Common Good*, published in 1996: “our neighbourhood is universal: so loving our neighbour has global dimensions.”<sup>8</sup>



It is also important to recognise that a key principle of Catholic social teaching is “the universal destination of goods”, by which it is intended that all should have access to the goods of this world. We in richer nations should not preclude others from the enjoyment of the riches that are available to us. As Pope John Paul II explained: “God gave the earth to the whole human race for the sustenance of all its members, without excluding or favouring anyone.”<sup>9</sup> This means that nobody should be inhibited from enjoying the fruits of the earth because of where they were born. We should not prevent people from migrating to better their condition.

Pope Francis draws this link between the right to migrate and the universal destination of goods when he writes that no one “can remain excluded because of his or her place of birth, much less because of privileges enjoyed by others who were born in lands of greater opportunity. The limits and borders of individual states cannot stand in the way of this.” He goes on to underline that it is “unacceptable that the mere place of one’s birth or residence should result in his or her possessing fewer opportunities for a developed and dignified life.”<sup>10</sup>

Exploring the theme “towards an ever wider we” for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2021, Pope Francis warned that, in today’s context, our concept of ‘we’ is increasingly under threat from nationalist or individualist tendencies, with the highest price being paid by those viewed as ‘the other’ – whether living abroad or new arrivals to our shores. Reinforcing the



message of *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis calls on us to counter this prevailing trend by working towards the establishment of a single 'we', encompassing the whole of humanity.<sup>11</sup> It is through this lens that the Catholic Church sees the movement of people across borders and through which we should consider our response to migrants and refugees seeking to build their lives here.

This perspective is different from those which often shape contemporary discussion around migrants and refugees, especially in the political sphere. Rather than beginning with our own national systems, then broadening our focus to include the drivers of displacement 'upstream', we are challenged to start with a global approach to upholding human dignity and to work from there. We must also ground our response to migrants and refugees in a recognition that the whole earth exists for the flourishing of all people, regardless of where they were born.

## *Our principles...*

- ❖ **Our response to migrants and refugees is rooted in the innate worth of each human person**
- ❖ **Recognising the universal destination of goods, we must not exclude others from having the means to flourish simply because of where they were born**
- ❖ **Nationalist or individualistic tendencies should not be allowed to take hold and prevent us seeing humanity as a single family**



# III. The right to flourish in one's homeland

Our responsibility to address the factors driving people from their homes.



Many people become migrants or refugees because they cannot flourish in their own country. This is a great tragedy, as all people have a right to live in dignity in the place of their birth. This issue was raised as early as 1891 by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*. He wrote: “no one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life.”<sup>12</sup> This was reaffirmed in *Fratelli Tutti*, with Pope Francis explaining that: “Ideally, unnecessary migration ought to be avoided” and that “this entails creating in countries of origin the conditions needed for a dignified life and integral development.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* emphasises, with specific reference to migrant workers, that while they must be welcomed and respected, “At the same time, conditions that foster increased work opportunities in people’s place of origin are to be promoted as much as possible.”<sup>14</sup>

This perspective does not dilute our obligations to welcome migrants and refugees, nor does it undermine people’s fundamental right to migrate. Rather, it is intended to highlight that the conditions necessary for a dignified life should exist everywhere without exception. This is required to genuinely realise the



ideal of a single human family and to ensure that people do not experience conditions in which their human dignity can only be protected by leaving their homeland. We should also bear in mind that migration is neither desirable nor possible for many who live in parts of the world affected by violence or poverty.

Reflecting on the right to flourish in one's own homeland, Pope John Paul II noted: "By means of a farsighted local and national administration, more equitable trade and supportive international cooperation, it is possible for every country to guarantee its own population, in addition to freedom of expression and movement, the possibility to satisfy basic needs such as food, health care, work, housing and education; the frustration of these needs forces many into a position where their only option is to emigrate."<sup>15</sup>

Whilst countries and peoples are responsible for their own economic development and for creating the political and economic preconditions for development to happen, richer nations also have a responsibility to support, and certainly to not impede, the development of poorer nations.

This responsibility was set out by Pope Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio*, where he appealed: "The hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance.

And the Church, cut to the quick by this cry, asks each and every man to hear his brother's plea and answer it lovingly",<sup>16</sup>

before continuing to set out the duties of wealthier nations to act with mutual solidarity, social justice, and universal charity.<sup>17</sup>

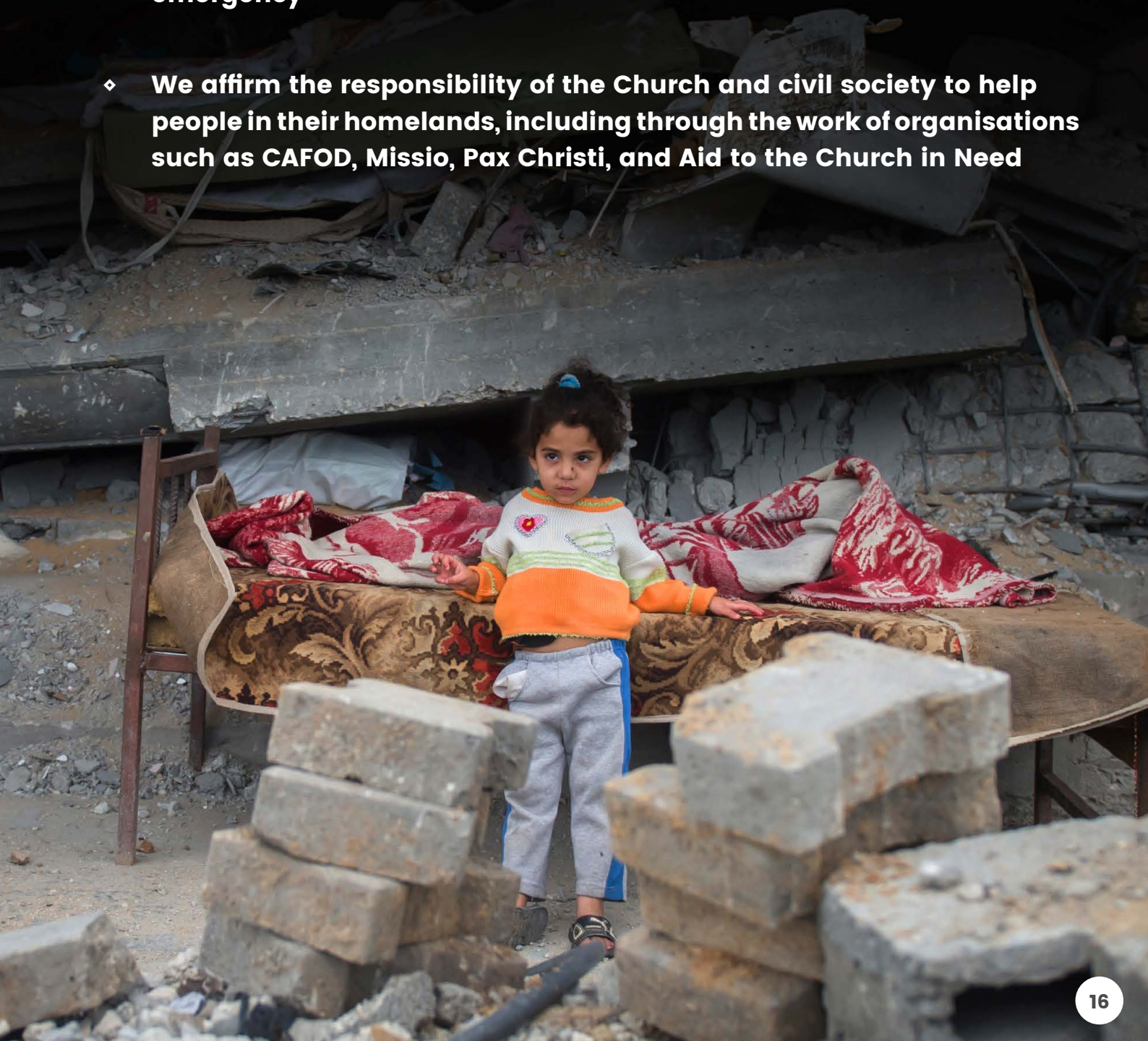
War, violence, and insecurity are often at the root of people leaving their homelands. Each member of the family of nations has a responsibility to promote peace and human rights throughout the world, so that all peoples can flourish in the countries in which they live. In *The Common Good*, the Bishops of England and Wales explored these duties in our own context, placing assistance for refugees alongside issues including fair international trade policies, support for the United Nations, and control of the arms trade.<sup>18</sup>

**Each member of the family of nations has a responsibility to promote peace and human rights throughout the world, so that all peoples can flourish in the countries in which they live**



## *Our principles...*

- ◆ **We recognise the right of all people to flourish in their homeland; every nation has a duty to uphold this by working for peace, promoting good governance and tackling the causes of poverty**
- ◆ **We ask our own government to help other countries address the factors that drive people from their homelands, including through the provision of a just aid budget, control of the arms trade, promotion of human rights and action to tackle the climate emergency**
- ◆ **We affirm the responsibility of the Church and civil society to help people in their homelands, including through the work of organisations such as CAFOD, Missio, Pax Christi, and Aid to the Church in Need**





# IV. The right to migrate

Our responsibility to welcome people in our own communities.



Alongside the right of every person to flourish in their homeland, Pope Francis explains that: “until substantial progress is made in achieving this goal, we are obliged to respect the right of all individuals to find a place that meets their basic needs and those of their families, and where they can find personal fulfilment.”<sup>19</sup> Pope Paul VI also underscored the importance of people’s right to migrate, calling on nations hosting migrants to “favor their integration, facilitate their professional advancement and give them access to decent housing where, if such is the case, their families can join them.”<sup>20</sup> This is an important aspect of the principle of the universal destination

of goods emphasised in *Fratelli Tutti*. Regardless of where people are born, they should have access to the goods necessary to enable them to flourish.

Catholic social teaching suggests that this right should be broadly interpreted, encompassing the search for economic opportunities as well as escaping threats to personal safety. In *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, Pope Pius XII states that the Holy Family in exile are the model and protectors of every migrant and refugee who “compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land”.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, the Catechism states that: “The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to

welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin."<sup>22</sup>

This approach has also been emphasised by successive Popes in their messages to mark the World Day of Migrants and Refugees. In 2000 Pope John Paul II underscored the legitimacy of migration to escape poverty, stating: "In many regions of the world today people live in tragic situations of instability and uncertainty. It does not come as a surprise that in such contexts the poor and the destitute make plans to escape... [they] have no alternative than to leave their own country to venture into the unknown."<sup>23</sup>

At the same time Catholic social teaching recognises a qualified right of states to control their borders. The Catechism sets out that: "political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions."<sup>24</sup> Pope John Paul II affirmed that the right to migrate "is to be regulated, because practicing it indiscriminately may do harm and be detrimental to the common good of the community that receives the migrant."<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, in *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis pointed out that while every nation has a responsibility to uphold universal rights: "it can fulfil that responsibility in a variety of ways. It can offer a generous welcome to those in urgent need, or work to improve living conditions in their native lands

by refusing to exploit those countries or to drain them of natural resources, backing corrupt systems that hinder the dignified development of their peoples."<sup>26</sup> These different ways are, of course, not mutually exclusive.

The right to migrate does not, therefore, automatically invalidate all border controls. However, the acceptability of such measures is limited to circumstances in which they are clearly required to protect the receiving community. Controls on migration should be exercised with compassion, giving special attention to people who need to leave their country in order to flourish and live in dignity. As Pope Pius XII wrote to the US Bishops: "the sovereignty of the State, although it must be respected, cannot be exaggerated to the point that access to this land is, for inadequate or unjustified reasons, denied to needy and decent people from other nations, provided of course, that the public wealth, considered very carefully, does not forbid this."<sup>27</sup>

On this basis, the starting point for public policy should involve respecting a broad right to migrate and restricting it only when demonstrably necessary, rather than beginning with sealed borders and facilitating immigration only when desired. Furthermore, any decision by states to regulate migration "cannot be based solely on protecting their own prosperity."<sup>28</sup> Upholding the common good of our society must never be reduced to economic calculations or utilitarian



concepts of welfare. It should also consider social peace, distributive justice, and care for the poorest of our sisters and brothers.<sup>29</sup> Our responsibilities for the promotion of the common good do not stop at national boundaries and require that we hold within our hearts, within our churches and within our systems of government, a desire to welcome migrants and refugees.

In exercising these rights and duties, politicians must develop policies that are humane and effective. It is important that governments work together to establish safe routes, such as resettlement programmes and humanitarian corridors, for the passage of refugees. It is also important that visa schemes are well-managed so that migrants can quickly contribute to the common good of their new communities and so that they and their families are not beset by uncertainty or inhumane conditions.

The Church understands the concern that some countries and communities might have about high levels of migration. Pope Francis noted in *Fratelli Tutti*: “in some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm”<sup>30</sup> and he recognised that this is part of our natural instinct. Governments have to balance the protection of the rights of their citizens with their duty

to welcome migrants and refugees, but it is important that we do not allow this to result in hostility. Pope Francis has warned that fear and alarm about migration is often exploited for political purposes, leading to a xenophobic mentality as people close in on themselves. As Christians, we must never view migrants as less worthy, less important or less human. Indeed, we should promote a better life for those coming to our country and appreciate the many riches that people bring with them. Echoing Pope Francis, we affirm that our country will be more fruitful and productive the more it is able to develop a creative openness to others.<sup>31</sup>

As part of the Universal Church, we also have an opportunity and a responsibility to understand the stories of migrants and refugees, through dialogue with the Church in their home countries and those they have passed through during their journeys. In doing so we can better respond to Pope Francis’ call to remember that migrants and refugees “rather than simply being a statistic, are first of all persons who have faces, names and individual stories”<sup>32</sup>, and to offer a more human response, rooted in the reality of people’s experiences.



## *Our principles...*

- ◇ **We uphold the right to migrate, which may be exercised not only by those fleeing threats to their safety but also by those seeking to build a better life for themselves and their families**
- ◇ **We recognise that states have a right to control their borders; however, such measures cannot be based on economic factors alone; states have a responsibility to promote the common good of the people within their boundaries, but they also have obligations to the wider world**
- ◇ **We encourage the extension of safe routes such as resettlement programmes, visa schemes and humanitarian corridors, so that people can exercise their right to migrate in a dignified and humane manner**
- ◇ **We must not allow the concerns that some communities might have about migration to be exploited for political purposes or allow such concerns to develop into a xenophobic attitude; Christian communities must play their part in providing a genuine welcome to migrants and refugees**
- ◇ **We seek and promote dialogue with the local Church in people's countries of origin, and the countries through which they have travelled, so that we can better understand their stories**



## V. Equality and human dignity

Recognising that all people are made in the image of God, regardless of where they come from or their legal status.



Immigration systems divide people into categories and assign differing rights according to their legal status.<sup>33</sup> Catholic social teaching, on the other hand, places an emphasis on the equal human dignity of all citizens, migrants, and refugees.

People who arrive in our country face challenges which we can help them overcome. Providing such assistance can be a fulfilling and enriching experience. We can act as individuals, working with charities, through our parishes and in many other ways. Reflecting on the challenges faced by people arriving in a new country, Pope Francis explains that: "No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human. For Christians, this way of thinking and acting is unacceptable, since it sets certain political preferences above deep convictions of our faith: the inalienable dignity of each human person regardless of origin, race or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love."<sup>34</sup>



We must ensure that all migrants and refugees receive dignified treatment irrespective of the legal status they are assigned. This has implications for several aspects of government policy, including the treatment of those who might be present in breach of immigration laws. The need for such dignified treatment has been highlighted in teaching documents by various Bishops' Conferences including *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us*, published by the US Conference. This reiterates that human dignity must be respected even in cases of non-legal immigration.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the Refugee Convention acknowledges that those who seek asylum may have to breach national immigration rules in order to enter a country.<sup>36</sup> It is important for governments to recognise that this does not undermine their rights.

Pope Francis has outlined the practical steps that we should take towards upholding the human dignity of migrants and refugees. For example, he has emphasised the need for states to offer "personal safety and access to basic services."<sup>37</sup> This is expanded upon in the twenty pastoral action points published by the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Vatican. These specify actions governments should take such as providing access to basic healthcare, free movement within the host country, and an equal right to schooling for child migrants and refugees. These should be provided regardless of legal status.<sup>38</sup>

It is important that border security measures prioritise human dignity and the sanctity of life. The Catechism states that: "moral law prohibits exposing someone to mortal danger without grave reason, as well as refusing assistance to a person in danger."<sup>39</sup> While there may be legitimate debate about the best way for a government to protect those crossing its borders, there is nevertheless a clear responsibility not to endanger human life and to assist people in distress wherever possible. As Pope Benedict XVI emphasised: "States have the right to regulate migration flows and to defend their own frontiers, always guaranteeing the respect due to the dignity of each and every human person."<sup>40</sup>



Accordingly, Pope Francis has called for states to end “the return of migrants to unsafe countries and to give priority to saving lives at sea, with predictable rescue and disembarkation devices”.<sup>41</sup> This has important implications for an island nation such as our own. Bishops’ Conferences, including the Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales and COMECE, have called for priority to be placed on rescue operations in areas such as the Mediterranean and the English Channel. We have also called for the establishment of more safe routes so that people do not need to risk their lives at sea.<sup>42</sup>

The Holy Father has drawn to our attention specific policies which we should avoid in order to protect the dignity of migrants and refugees, including the use of immigration detention, stating: “For the sake of the fundamental dignity of every human person, we must strive to find alternative solutions to detention for those who enter a country without authorisation.”<sup>43</sup>

The Catholic Church has long proposed forms of international governance to uphold universal rights. This is especially important when it comes to migrants and refugees. International laws and conventions can play an important role in protecting their human dignity. For this reason, the Holy See supports treaties such as the Refugee Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*, which recognises the international nature of these challenges, states: “Concern for refugees must lead us to reaffirm and highlight universally recognized human rights, and to ask that the effective recognition of these rights be guaranteed”.<sup>44</sup> The *Compendium* also highlights the protection of family life as an essential aspect of upholding human dignity among migrants and refugees, stating that: “Immigrants are to be received as persons and helped, together with their families, to become a part of societal life. In this context, the right of reuniting families should be respected and promoted.”<sup>45</sup> We must ensure that this is reflected in the United Kingdom’s own laws.





## *Our principles...*

- ◇ **We defend the fundamental human dignity of all migrants and refugees, regardless of their legal status, including through policies providing access to decent accommodation, healthcare, and childhood education, as well as facilitating family reunification**
- ◇ **We call for the sanctity of life to be prioritised in all border security arrangements and reject measures that unnecessarily place people in danger or deny reasonable assistance to those in need**
- ◇ **We call upon the government to avoid the use of immigration detention, arbitrary expulsion and other practices which violate human dignity**
- ◇ **We urge the fulfilment of obligations under international frameworks protecting migrants and refugees, such as the Refugee Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Global Compact on Refugees, and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration**
- ◇ **Recognising the practical contribution that our Church can make, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as Caritas, the Jesuit Refugee Service, and the St Vincent De Paul Society, as well as parish and diocesan initiatives, in upholding the human dignity of migrants and refugees**





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**No one can remain excluded because of his or her place of birth, much less because of privileges enjoyed by others who were born in lands of greater opportunity. The limits and borders of individual states cannot stand in the way of this.**

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 121

# VI. Human trafficking and slavery

Confronting the evils of slavery in today's world.



Among the gravest violations of human dignity are trafficking and slavery. Today some 50 million people are held in slavery, with migrants and refugees particularly vulnerable to such exploitation.<sup>46</sup>

The Catechism explicitly condemns the enslavement of human beings, stating: "It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit."<sup>47</sup> This was reiterated by the Second Vatican Council, which set out the Church's opposition to: "slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons".<sup>48</sup>

Pope Francis has consistently highlighted the Church's responsibility to combat trafficking and slavery in today's context. Addressing the Santa Marta Group, the Holy Father encouraged its work towards "fostering an ever-greater understanding of the scope and nature of human trafficking and to strengthening cooperation on the international, national and local levels so that effective ways to end this scourge may be found and that its victims may receive needed care, both physically and spiritually."<sup>49</sup>



The Church in England and Wales has responded to Pope Francis's lead, with many charities and research groups working to overcome human trafficking and slavery. It is essential that this work continues. Businesses and consumers in our country can also help address these issues. Businesses must ensure that their supply chains are free from slavery and consumers should be alert to situations where they might be buying services provided by people who are held in slavery.

The Church and many charities working in this field, are actively engaged with churches, governments, and relief organisations in countries from which trafficking is most common. This work is vital in helping to promote, in a variety of different ways, better prospects for those who might be trafficked, and it is important that dioceses and parishes support it where they can.

To help reflection on these questions, the Vatican Migrants and Refugees Section has produced *Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking*. This document recognises how restrictive immigration policies force people into the hands of traffickers. It highlights the importance of tackling trafficking and slavery not only through prosecution of organised crime but also upholding people's right to flourish in their homeland, providing safe channels for migration, and addressing the consumer demand that makes trafficking a profitable endeavour.<sup>50</sup>

## *Our principles...*

- ♦ **Reaffirming the Church's responsibility to help eliminate the evils of trafficking and slavery, we support the work of Catholic organisations such as the Santa Marta Group**
- ♦ **We recognise that trafficking and slavery are exacerbated by a lack of accessible alternatives for migration or seeking sanctuary - efforts to tackle trafficking and slavery must therefore go beyond more active law enforcement; we also need to support people to flourish in their homelands, establish more safe routes for migrants and refugees, and work to eliminate the demand for those services that slave labour continues to meet**



# VII. The gift of migration

Celebrating the way in which migrants and refugees enrich our communities.



While we acknowledge the challenges and suffering experienced by many migrants and refugees, as Pope Francis explains, it is important to recognise that people are “agents in their own redemption”<sup>51</sup> and that furthermore “The arrival of those who are different, coming from other ways of life and cultures, can be a gift, for the stories of migrants are always stories of an encounter”.<sup>52</sup>

The prominence given to people’s agency and gifts reflects the message of Pope Pius XII that: “If the two parties, those who agree to leave their native land and those who agree to admit the newcomers, remain anxious to eliminate as far as possible all obstacles to the birth and growth of real confidence between the country of emigration and that of immigration, all those affected by such transference of people and places will profit by the transaction. The families will receive a plot of ground which will be native for them in the true sense of the word; the thickly inhabited countries will be relieved and their people will acquire new friends in foreign countries; and the states which receive the emigrants will acquire industrious citizens. In this way, the nations which give and those which receive will both contribute to the increased welfare of man and the progress of human culture.”<sup>53</sup> Whilst the language used in this document might seem





a little dated, the sentiments are very important. As individuals, as parishes and as a country, we should welcome migrants and refugees into our communities and ensure that they can live flourishing and dignified lives.

By welcoming migrants and refugees and by helping them to build a life in their new country, we are acting in solidarity and taking concrete steps towards creating the universal brotherhood of man that the Catholic Church so desires. In policy terms this necessitates providing people with clear routes to citizenship and giving those without a regular migration status the opportunity to regularise it.

We must also go beyond these procedural matters. The Vatican Migrants and Refugees Section has summarised the contributions of migrants to the life of the receiving country, noting: “People on the move bring along with them a great potential that is social, economic, cultural, human, and religious. The presence of migrants and refugees empowers every dimension of integral human development and offers our society an opportunity to become more intercultural and grow in humanity.”<sup>54</sup>

Pope John Paul II explained that the integration of migrants and refugees makes our communities “more and more a reflection of the multi-faceted gifts of God to human beings.”<sup>55</sup> This is affirmed by the Vatican’s position that: “Contemporary migrations, especially those involving a great number of people, promote the encounter of races and peoples, and the construction of societies that are culturally diverse, able to live out communion in diversity, which is the objective of God’s plan for humanity. The shift taking place from monocultural to multicultural societies can be a sign of the living presence of God in history and in the community of humankind, for it offers a providential opportunity for the fulfilment of God’s plan for a universal communion.”<sup>56</sup>

We hope that all the Catholic faithful will recognise that migrants and refugees enrich our culture and parish life. Pope Francis has reflected on the gifts that people arriving from elsewhere bring directly to our parishes: “the arrival of Catholic migrants and refugees can energize the ecclesial life of the communities that welcome them. Often, they bring an enthusiasm that can revitalize our communities and enliven our celebrations. Sharing different expressions of faith and devotions offers us a privileged opportunity for experiencing more fully the catholicity of the People of God.”<sup>57</sup>

There are also economic benefits to a country that welcomes migration, including migrants and refugees developing businesses and becoming employers themselves, though we should not reduce this issue simply to a form of economic calculus. These economic benefits are highlighted in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*: “Immigration can be a resource for development rather than an obstacle to it... These people come from less privileged areas of the earth and their arrival in developed countries is often perceived as a threat to the high levels of well-being achieved thanks to decades of economic growth. In most cases, however, immigrants fill a labour need which would otherwise remain unfilled”.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, the *Compendium* emphasises that the dignity of migrant workers must be respected: “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.”<sup>59</sup> Likewise, Pope Benedict XVI highlighted that “these labourers cannot be considered as a commodity or a mere workforce. They must not, therefore, be treated like any other factor of production. Every migrant is a human person who, as such, possesses fundamental, inalienable rights that must be respected by everyone and in every circumstance.”<sup>60</sup>





# *Our principles...*

- ◇ **Migration enriches our culture – we must welcome migrants and refugees so that they can live fulfilled lives in their new country**
- ◇ **We support the simplification of routes to citizenship and opportunities for people to regularise their immigration status**
- ◇ **We celebrate the vital contribution of migrants and refugees to our parishes and the life of the Church in England and Wales**
- ◇ **We recognise the gifts that migrants and refugees bring which can enrich our society in many ways, including economically**
- ◇ **We encourage policies that give migrants and refugees the right to work, to facilitate their contribution to the common good of our society**
- ◇ **We call upon all those who employ migrants and refugees to treat them in a dignified and humane way**



## VIII. Concluding reflection

*“So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).*

Reflecting on the message in St Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians: “So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19), Pope Francis reminds us that migrants and refugees are not a problem to be solved, but sisters and brothers to be welcomed, respected, and loved.<sup>61</sup>

The Church in England and Wales is fully engaged with public policy relating to migration, the status of refugees, and tackling human trafficking, in order to promote the dignified treatment of all those who come to our country. Catholic social teaching recognises the dilemmas that governments face but emphasises that the dignity of each and every human person must come first.

We call upon all Catholics to help ensure that their Members of Parliament and local authorities are aware of their responsibilities towards migrants and refugees. Pope Francis has also called for international institutions to be fully involved in these issues, recognising their global nature.

Responsibility for promoting the common good nevertheless goes much further than the public policy arena, it is the obligation of us all. The arrival of people from elsewhere enriches our community in so many ways but, even where it brings economic pressures, we should recognise that the goods of the world do not belong only to those born in richer countries. People have a right to seek a fulfilled life outside their homeland, especially if they are unable to live in dignity there.

We strongly commend the work of Catholic agencies and charities which strive to welcome, promote, protect, and integrate people when they come to the United Kingdom. We encourage parishes to assist this work and participate in the synodal process by walking together, talking together, and praying together as one community, to promote the mission of the Church.

Finally, we ask all the Catholic faithful to reach out the hand of friendship to migrants and refugees so that they can help us grow in the love of God and we can together grow in universal fraternity and solidarity.





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