

Plenary Resolutions: November 2015



STATEMENT ON THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Our hearts are touched as followers of Jesus Christ, who taught us the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 25-37) about caring for our neighbour in their need.

Every day thousands of men, women and children, escaping persecution and conflict are making perilous journeys, risking everything in search of safety and a better life.

Our Governments have a responsibility to play their part in addressing their legitimate humanitarian needs. We recognise the work being undertaken in refugee camps, for which the Governments should be commended. However, the Governments could and should do more: in particular the resettlement of 20,000 refugees from the conflict in Syria under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme should be expedited, given priority during the next 18 months. This compassionate programme could realistically be extended to more of the millions of displaced people. The barbarous attacks in Paris last week should not deter us from caring for those in need.

Effective resettlement goes far beyond simply allowing people to reside here. The Governments' commitment to English language training is a welcome example of how refugees can be helped to play an active role in our communities. However there is scope for real improvements, not least through removing barriers to asylum seekers looking to support themselves.

Our concern is not only for those arriving under the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme, but also for the many refugees already living in our communities.



We encourage our Governments to recognise the value of properly resourced initiatives promoting integration, enabling refugees to work and contribute to wider society. The experience of the Catholic Community in England and Wales, which consists of people from a rich diversity of ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, offers encouragement and example.

Yet this crisis is a challenge for all of us. We are enormously encouraged by the generosity that has been shown by so many people, in recent months. We urge people to continue contributing their time, skills and funds through our dioceses or the many excellent charities working to support refugees.

Everybody can help build a culture of welcome, even by simply extending the hand of friendship to people as they settle into their new home.

Today there is intense awareness of the vast numbers of displaced persons sheltering in refugee camps and cities throughout the world. They too are our brothers and sisters. They command our moral concern. Our recognition of the innate human dignity of each person in this refugee crisis should elicit a generous response. This is the challenge to our shared moral identity and culture, our civilisation.

The Catholic Church is determined to give steadfast witness to that God-given dignity of every person. That witness finds expression in the practical help which Catholics give. All over the world people are striving to help refugees on the basis of their need, not their background. In these countries, let us all show that same hospitality and offer welcome to those who are in desperate need and who turn to us for help.