

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY

12 SEPTEMBER 2010

MIGRATION

Building Bridges or Barriers?



'Who is my neighbour?'

Luke 10:29



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Catholic Association for Racial Justice

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Racial Justice Sunday

12 September 2010

On Migration: Building Bridges or Barriers?

'Who is my neighbour?' Luke 10:29

This year Racial Justice Sunday is on 12 September 2010. The theme is **Migration: Building Bridges or Barriers? We address the question in Luke 10:29 'Who is my neighbour?'** The materials have been compiled to assist you in the planning of worship in your churches on Racial Justice Sunday. You may want to use the material just as it is or adapt it to your own context.

Racial Justice Sunday 2010 offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on the fact that we are all members of the human family, bound together by our common humanity. As such we should be working together to build bridges of all sorts with each other and to eliminate any preventable barriers.

Churches throughout Britain and Ireland share a common biblical tradition that migration and welcoming strangers, particularly those who are vulnerable and in need, is not a new phenomenon and is an essential aspect of our mission and ministry. Migration is an integral part of our history and an important dimension of our current reality and experience living in Britain and Ireland.

The Church has a duty to concern itself with all the pressing social issues that touch deeply on human dignity. Our Christian scriptures teach us that migration is also a theological event. It is significant to remember that God revealed his covenant to his people when they were in the process of migrating, and that Jesus and his family were forced to become refugees in Egypt, to escape persecution. **Therefore, based on the life and teachings of Jesus, we need to be prepared to follow his example and to cross borders of all kinds, to create a community of compassion and generosity that reflects God's unlimited love for all people.**

These Racial Justice Sunday materials are intended to serve as a **resource for you** and to provide an overview of the very broad topic of Migration. They can also be used as an orientation and advocacy tool at anytime. We hope that you will find the material useful. We express special thanks to all those who contributed to and compiled the information and texts.

A Background to Migration



Migration is the movement of people either across an international border, or within a State. It is a population movement, encompassing any kind of movement of people, whatever its length, composition and causes; it includes migration of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people and economic migrants.

Source: International Organization for Migration

Migration has been a part of human history since the beginning of humankind. In all periods, people have left their homelands for

a variety of reasons. Many migrants who arrive in Britain and Ireland do so after difficult journeys from their countries of origin. Some have fled from hunger, war and persecution; some have been driven away by environmental changes or trafficked against their will. Others migrate, either temporarily or permanently, in search of greater opportunities or to widen their horizons.

Those who migrate are not a homogeneous group. Generally speaking, a **migrant** can be defined as **a person who has left his/her**



country of origin or residence and has moved to another country to take up temporary or permanent residence in that country. In very broad terms, 'migrant' includes immigrants, emigrants, refugees, people under subsidiary forms of protection, sanctuary seekers (asylum seekers), those seeking other forms of protection, undocumented migrants and repatriates.

Our Christian faith teaches us that the goods of the earth belong to all people. All people should therefore have the right to migrate in order to support themselves and their families if they cannot do so in their own countries. Sovereign nations have a moral responsibility to accommodate this right within the limits of their resources. While many individuals and families are successful in their migration journeys, for many others it is characterized by exploitation, insecurity, injustice and poverty.

What does it mean for us as Christians to welcome the migrant, the newcomer in our midst?

Migrants have contributed to shaping the fabric of almost every society throughout the world. Those who have made Britain and Ireland their home - both settled communities and newly arrived migrants - have enriched our societies through a variety of valuable contributions. In spite of this, we still do not live in a land where strangers are welcomed, where differences are celebrated and where all people are valued. Migrants continue to challenge our ability to live peacefully with one another. The presence of migrants

forces us to become more aware of our own social and cultural prejudices and preconceptions.

How best can we listen to the issues and concerns, as well as the hopes and dreams, which migrants bring with them?

The Church puts the sacredness of human life at the forefront of the migration debate. As Christians, the dignity and equality of all human beings is fundamental to our belief. We are all created in the image of God and are loved by God as part of one human family. The Scriptures challenge our preconceptions about each other and call upon us to speak out about injustice where we find it. Jesus was never afraid to cross social, cultural, geographic and religious boundaries. **Racial Justice Sunday** provides us with an opportunity to work together to create a society where the hatred, which breeds violence and division, is unacceptable and where everyone in our society, including all migrants, are allowed to realize their full potential and their human dignity.

How can a diverse society – and a diverse and multicultural church – share a sense of belonging with migrants?

Immigrant/Emigrant: A person who leaves his/her country or region to settle in another. The person leaves as an immigrant and becomes an emigrant once they have settled.

Migrant worker: A person admitted to a country for the specific purpose of exercising an economic activity which is remunerated from within that country. The length of stay is usually restricted as is the type of employment that s/he can hold.

Refugee: Any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social or political group, is outside of the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country, or who, not having a nationality and being outside of the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to fear, unwilling to return to it.

Repatriate: A person who has returned (either voluntarily or forcibly) to his/her place of origin or citizenship.

Sanctuary seeker (asylum seeker): A person who files an application for asylum in a country other than his/her own. He/she retains the status of a sanctuary seeker until his/her application is considered and adjudicated.

Trafficked person: A person who is illegally recruited, coerced and/or forcibly moved within or across national borders.

Undocumented migrant: A person who is not able to validate their residence or work in a country in accordance with the legal rules, including refused asylum seekers and visa overstayers.

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

FOR RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 2010



BIBLICAL REFLECTION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 2010

Migration - Building Bridges or Barriers?

Racial Justice Sunday is not intended to make us feel guilty. Nor is it the only day and time of the year when we reflect on ways to counter prejudices and racist practices - all those attitudes and actions that deny us sharing together in God's offer of fullness of life. The racial justice and anti-racist vocation or calling is about the whole of life and all of our relationships. Unfortunately, our world and life on these islands is not free from bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination. It is true that we have passed numerous laws to protect marginalised and vulnerable people in our communities. Yet, it is equally true that racism and similar cultures of discrimination and exclusion find new expressions today. For instance, there is a connection between the current phenomenon of migration, sanctuary seeking and racism and the growing support for and power-base of far-right politics. Even politics and politicians from the more traditional parties can fall into this trap, in their efforts to win votes by calling for and implementing more stringent border-controls and the means by which these are carried out.

The agenda of working towards a cohesive, inclusive and just society in the midst of narrow-minded and insular politics, one where all can contribute to the common good, must remain a priority for all. Churches have no option but to engage in this calling. For the gospel mandate is a call to engage in the mission of a God who seeks to ensure life in all its fullness for all. The reality is that there can be no peace and justice without anti-racism policies, practices and work and no reconciliation without addressing all forms of unfair exclusion and discrimination.

Reflect on

- **How can churches model the habit of welcome for all?**
- **How can our communities be the embodiment of grace in a multi-cultural, diverse and complex world?**

Among the insights from the readings for Racial Justice Sunday 2010, based on the theme *Migration - Building Bridges or Barriers*, are whispered shapes of the hope we all dream of and that points us to ways we can become bearers of reconciliation and justice. The many and continuing guises of racism along with its complex relationships with similar/other forms of marginalisation, can lead those engaged in anti-racism and inclusion work to despair. How can we address this possibility to despair with the life and hope of justice and reconciliation - God's dream for a world where goodness and righteousness prevail?

Our scriptures point us to ways we can practice living lives of just actions that build bridges - doing whatever is necessary to keep all of us honest, holy and righteous. So what insights can we glean from these readings?

The reflections below are based on the readings for Racial Justice Sunday 2010 in the Revised Common Lectionary, the Roman Catholic Lectionary, or both.

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

READINGS FROM REVISED COMMON

LECTIONARY

Heart of God

Jeremiah 4:11-28

Jeremiah's prophetic ministry began in Jerusalem around 627 BC and he would have witnessed the final years of Jerusalem before it fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. The context was troubled times and we have before us the portrait of a prophet who tries to help his people make some sense of their circumstances, rediscover who they are and look towards a future with hope. Images of women are numerous and they do reinforce stereotypes and pejorative representations as the worldview here is patriarchal. Notwithstanding, what insights can we draw for justice awareness, both racial and other? There are the images of marriage and adultery used to accuse Israel of betrayal compared with the faithfulness of God towards God's people. The use of the marriage metaphor is an interesting way to describe the covenant - the human experience of intimacy and love.

Judah is portrayed as much worse than Israel because Israel had been lost to the Assyrians and surely Judah could see her fate would be the same. If Judah would just repent and return to worship God faithfully, then Yahweh would restore Jerusalem to its former glory. The call to repent is repeated using various images. The anguish of the prophet seems to mirror the anguish of God: how can a people become so bent on self-destruction? No wonder God is unable to keep silent! Indeed, one may be overwhelmed with the bleakness of the passage and the sense of no easy answers here. Yet, the reading underscores the destructive forces that humans unleash on each other.

We are quite familiar with some of these: for instance through the many ways we continue to wage wars, marginalise, dehumanise and displace our fellow human beings. As in the time of Jeremiah, we are responsible for the destruction and denial

of life that we unleash on each other. Racism is one of the many ways that we continue down the road of destruction, of others and ourselves in the process. Greed is another way, and we are currently reaping the consequences of this. Why do we persist with actions and life-styles which are often not for the benefit of others and the common good, but are life denying. Hope takes the form of God's promise of a new covenant, this time to be written on the hearts of the people.

Reflect on

- **Ways we continue to marginalise other human beings? What are the 'new' shapes to racism in the UK?**
- **Ways through which God's promise of a new covenant can bring about a new day, with new relationships.**

Anger at Oppression

Psalm 14

This psalm is a lament, but with a difference. The Psalmist laments the breakdown of moral order and the destructive nature within the community – the defying and denying of God. 'Fools' are those who deny that God is concerned with human behaviour and flaunt any sense of accountability. To the psalmist, the world is full of such fools, people who are 'corrupt' (including cynics), and do terrible things. The cry 'there is no God' is common in the psalms. It is not a statement of belief or lack thereof and it is not an expression of atheism. Rather, it denies that God is concerned with their actions and thoughts. As long as they can get away with what they do, or persuade others of their right, then all is alright.

God, however, is in the community of those who follow God's ways and God will deliver the oppressed from the ungodly and there will be rejoicing. Hope for the psalmist lies with God and the psalmist draws on a deep tradition of hope. The psalmist is quite clear: there is accountability for those who presume their deeds go unnoticed. For the poor there is a reality beyond the present corruption and injustice. There are those who are wise, do good and seek after God. There will be a time of rejoicing and gladness.

Reflect on

- **Instances where the principles of justice were violated and what direct intervening role you took as a reconciler to protect the victims and to work for ways to change the system.**
- **What are the key insights you wish to share with others?**

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

READINGS FROM ROMAN CATHOLIC

LECTIONARY

Daring Advocacy

Exodus 32: 1, 7-14

Whose side will we be on: that of the God of abundant life and building bridges or that of our own creation of gods to fit our needs? What does it mean to be on the side of the God of abundant life? Exodus 32 offers us some insight through two different and related situations. In scenario 1 there is Moses at the top of Mount Sinai just about to conclude many days and nights in which he spent receiving instructions from God. Scenario 2 presents us with the Israelites at the base of the mountain becoming restless, having second thoughts about Moses ever returning: hence, their request to Aaron and the crafting of a golden calf. God is not pleased and orders Moses to get down back to base camp and let that lot of disbelievers know what God intends to do. They will be destroyed and God will start all over again with Moses! Moses, however, dares to take a stand for the people and argues with God. Even more remarkable is that God changes His mind! It is only after this that Moses returns to the people.

Rereading this encounter in the context of racial justice work, one is struck and encouraged by Moses' radical advocacy on behalf of the Israelites and his taking their side. This is clearly the view of the biblical narrator who thinks that Moses has done the right thing. Thus, in a summing up of Moses' life and career (end of Deuteronomy), we learn that 'never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.'

Justice advocacy today desperately needs the radical spirit of Moses and what we have here is considered powerful guidance for taking the side of those who are the most vulnerable and have no other defenders.

Reflect on

- **The ministry of justice advocacy - its shapes and dimensions, challenges and a spirituality for sustaining us through such a ministry**

It is helpful to locate this 'psalm of David', in the context of the Prophet Nathan's visit to David after his encounter with Bathsheba, the death of Uriah (her husband) and David's marriage to the broken-hearted widow. David had much to reflect on in relation to his actions, though he may not have been initially aware of the need. He may have thought it was the end of the matter, except that the prophet Nathan turns up and confronts the King with his wrong-doing. Truth is often hard to tell, even more difficult to hear if it is about us, and at the same time it is liberating. Psalm 51 captures the pain, the depth of guilt and the urgency of the situation. The imperative verbs – *have mercy, blot out, wash and cleanse* capture this sense of urgency and the sinful nature of David as reflected in his actions.

These powerful images are quite appropriate for our work in developing anti-racism work and practices and all other justice related work. Hating, coveting, excluding, hurting, killing, and denying other human beings opportunities to share in a full life emphasise how much we and our communities are still sinful, 'bent out of shape' and consequently 'miss the mark' of God's good purpose for us. Nurturing communities of welcome, inclusion and hospitality demands that we experience a cleansing and conversion that produces 'clean hearts', new and fresh beginnings, and renewed/clean spirits - with God as the active source.

Use Psalm 51

- **as an opportunity to reflect on our need to confront the truth about our lives (as individuals, communities and nations)**
- **and then attempt to rewrite Psalm 51 for us today**

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

READINGS FROM REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY AND ROMAN CATHOLIC LECTIONARY

Grace Abundant

1 Timothy 1:12-17

As one of the Pastoral Epistles, 1 Timothy is not only addressed to individuals. It is also addressed to the public square, interweaving personal injunctions and ecclesial advice, with the community very much at its heart. The epistle seems to suggest that Timothy has to cope with rival forms of Christianity, differing teachings from what was considered the tradition, the presence of people with power, and the views of the Greco-Roman society about Christians.

The selected reading underscores that responding to God's compassion is not about receiving a guarantee for a future gift, but taking up the offer of a relationship with a God who is going places. We are invited in grace to get on board and join this God who is on a mission – one of abundant grace. As seen in the life of Paul, God in Christ is in the business of embracing and inviting 'faulted people'. Such is the nature of God's generosity and it is a reconciling one. In terms of anti-racist work and practices, Christians must operate on the principle that some form of reconciliation or bridge-building is always possible and that healing can happen.

Reflect on

- **Examples of reconciliation and healing in communities torn apart by prejudices and racism. What contributed to the transformation, new perspectives and relationships?**

Seeking, Welcoming & Rejoicing

Luke 15:1-10

The three parables in Luke chapter 15 have been referred to as 'Gospel within the Gospel.' Our readings cover the very pithy parables of the lost sheep and lost coin: what Mark Twain referred to as 'the best short story ever told.' In few words we are presented with the very heart of the nature of the Divine Creator and Divine Love who goes at length and beyond to seek out, welcome and embrace the excluded, wounded, vulnerable and despairing human beings. These parables urge us to rethink any tendency towards religious bigotry, creating barriers, and any temptation of trying to 'read the mind of God' when it comes to who should be part of God's communities of grace.

What kind of God do we image in our word and actions? This is a critical question for reflection and if our words and acts do not measure up to the image of a seeking, welcoming, loving and embracing God, then we are 'missing the mark.' Ironically, while we tend to gravitate towards our created communities of like-minded and decent people, these parables push us out of our comfort zones to hang out with 'strange people' and 'throw parties' for the disadvantaged and those who do not fit our criteria. The bottom line is that our relationship with God cannot be separated from our relationship with fellow human beings.

Reflect on

- **How can we work towards creating spaces for each other around the table?**
- **How long will we continue standing outside rather than entering inside and taking our place around the table?**
- **What kind of God do we image in our word and actions?**
- **What about the idea of being lost and then rediscovering one's place in the community?**

There is passion and joy in living lives geared towards wholeness and inclusion and it is costly. Obsession with policing 'who are in and who are out' makes us unable to perceive and share in the joy. Seeking, welcoming, embracing and including, produce joy for anyone with an open heart to make this a habit of their living. It produces a wholeness that overflows into joy. On the other hand if we operate with closed hearts and clenched fists and in restricting/excluding ways through prejudice and discrimination, then joy evaporates and we become dried-up and lost individuals and communities. This is a timely message for our context today in our response to migrants.

Are we able to see beyond our own needs and own 'worlds?' Embracing and welcoming is not about less to share. It is about more - abundance. It is about more feasting, more wine, more food, more music and dancing - a carnival kind of a party, that is JOY! If we operate on the principle of scarcity then we will see less and images of losing will take over our lives. But if we operate on the principle of abundance there will be plenty - more than enough. Is there a metaphor here for our life together as a faith community and as a society as a whole?

Reflect on

- **The importance of helping people assume responsibility for things as they are and things as they ought to be**
- **How the way seeking, welcoming and embracing is often routed through conflict and confrontation**
- **If grace/love is to become the orienting metaphor, how would our life together be shaped differently?**

SUGGESTIONS FOR HOMILY/SERMON



SUGGESTION FOR HOMILY/SERMON - 1 RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2010

Most of us have had some experience of moving. Think of the first time you ever moved home, perhaps as a child with your family. Think of the time you left home as a young adult, moving away for work or for college. And some of us in the church here today have probably had even bigger moves - leaving behind our homeland, our country, sometimes through choice, and sometimes through the harsh realities of circumstances.

Migration is a reality that touches every person and every community today, whether it is migration with a capital 'M', when we are immigrants from abroad, or migration with a small 'm', when we are displaced within our own country.

In the three gospel parables today, nearly everyone is moving. The lost sheep has gone off on its own, leaving the ninety-nine to themselves, and the shepherd goes after it. The woman who finds her coin goes out to her friends and neighbours and invites them back into her own home. The younger son

leaves his father and goes off to a distant country. In each parable there is a message for us about what it means to be away from the security of our home, and what it means for us to welcome others who are unknown to us.

We are so used to hearing the parable of the lost sheep that we forget how surprising it is. Jesus says: if you lost one sheep, wouldn't you leave ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go looking for it? The natural answer, surely, is 'no'. You wouldn't risk the safety of the ninety-nine by going on a dangerous and uncertain hunt across the mountains. The lost sheep is not special, and it's certainly not worth more than the ninety-nine sheep put together.

Unless, as a shepherd, you stop to think what this sheep is going through. The anxiety of being lost, the loneliness of being separated from the sheep you know and love, the fear that you may never find any security or friendship again. It's this understanding and compassion in the heart of the shepherd that make

him realise that the lost sheep matters far more than the ones that are safe - because of the suffering it's going through.

We need to have this kind of compassion and sensitivity with all the people we meet, especially with those on the edges of our communities - in the parish, in our schools, in our neighbourhoods and places of work. Perhaps we look at someone and think 'It's just another person - I hardly know them'. But what a difference it would make if we stopped to think: Where are you from? Have you settled in here yet? What are you going through? Do you have any one to turn to? Just by asking these questions to ourselves, it would help us to be more open to others.

Our hearts will become more tender if we realise that every person we meet has a tender heart of their own. Very often we can show support to someone simply by stopping to talk to them, asking them how they are. Especially the people we don't know, the ones we are a bit nervous with because they are different from us. We don't need to be do-gooders who are always interfering in the lives of others, but reaching out with love and sensitivity to those we don't know in our communities can be one of the greatest acts of kindness for a Christian. It makes us like the Good Shepherd in the parable.

The woman who finds her lost coin is another character who acts in surprising ways. The coin, a drachma, is not a large amount of money. Would you throw a house

party and invite your neighbours in if you found a few pounds you had lost? Of course not.

The parable shows us the joy of heaven whenever someone repents of their sins. It also shows us something about God's love, which is like the extravagant love of this woman. When something good happens, even something relatively small, she can't contain herself. She needs to share it with people around her, to celebrate. She has such a big heart that she wants to include everyone in her joy. Not just her friends, the people she knows and loves, but also her neighbours - the people who just happened to be around, living nearby, or passing by.

Think of your own neighbours at home. Imagine a circle with your home at the centre that was wide enough to include the hundred people who live closest to you. The circle of your immediate neighbours. How many of these hundred people do you know? How many of them have you ever talked to? How many of them would you even recognise?

This woman's heart was big enough to include everyone who came into her orbit, by geographical chance. So many people come into orbit around our own lives, not just at home, but in all the situations of our day.

We are usually good with our friends. We give them time and attention and love; we ask them how they are. This parable is a real challenge to us because the woman includes her neighbours as well as her friends. It's

something we can do in different ways. Building bridges, stepping over barriers, even tearing them down.

The last parable in the gospel is the well-known parable of the prodigal son. You have probably heard many sermons about the younger son, or about his father, or about his older brother who stayed at home. But there is another group of people in this parable that we don't hear about very often: the local inhabitants of the foreign land where he was living, the land where the famine took place.

This is what the story says: 'He would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating, but no one offered him anything'.

Here is a man, a migrant, a foreigner, who is starving to death. And no one helps him. It's not because they are themselves starving and unable to help. The famine can't be that severe, because they still have pigs to eat, and plenty of food to feed the pigs. But this stranger starves. Is it because no one notices him? Or is it because they do notice him but don't care? Or are they caring people who think he somehow lies outside their responsibility? Whether it's blindness, or callousness, or detachment, the effect is the same. Someone is left to die, and he only survives by escaping from the country that could help him and going home.

The prodigal son is a beautiful parable about the mercy of God, but it's also a parable about the suffering that immigrants and strangers often endure through the indifference of the people around them. It's true that we can't be responsible for the physical needs of every person that we meet each day. But it is our responsibility as Christians to open our hearts to those around us, especially those who are isolated, those who are strangers, those from another country, those who are vulnerable in any way.

Perhaps you don't know what you should do or how you should react. Perhaps you are afraid of getting involved in a situation that is too big for you to handle. That's quite understandable. All Christ asks us to do is to take the first step, to say a few words of welcome, to ask someone how they are. And if something develops from that, then he will help us as we go along.

We are not called to deal with an abstract situation, we are called simply to meet this person. This unique person may be a lost sheep, an unknown neighbour, or someone who has a father in a distant land. And this father may be praying that someone, somewhere - you or me - would speak to his dear child and welcome him with sensitivity and compassion.

SUGGESTION FOR HOMILY/SERMON - 2 RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2010

An ancient rabbi was asked why telling stories, rather than making statements, seemed to be a more effective way of communicating with people. He thought for a while and scratched his head and then said. Oh, listen, I will tell you a story. He then went on to tell a story about a man called 'Truth' who married a woman named 'Story' and had several children, whom they named 'Myth', 'Satire', 'Action' and 'Parable.'

On this Sunday for Racial Justice it is good to be reminded that all humans long to find space to tell their story. This year we are called to listen to the stories of migrants in the background of God's story that has been retold over and over again in the Bible, in the Church, in other faiths and in society. We want to make sure that no story is left untold and unheard. We are called to build bridges not barriers. We are called to begin this process today and in the days and years to come as we build a Church and a society that are inclusive, a Church and a society that

listen to all stories, a Church and society that are true community.

What is our story today and what is the story of migration in our world today? Our story is a story of uncertainties. The story of migration has always been a story of uncertainty. We live in a world of uncertainties both in Church and society. Ours is a fragmented age. Some have called this the time when the West is experiencing the same ambivalences or contradictions felt by the rest of the world. It is the time of the *shaking of foundations*. Old certainties have gone. This was expressed so well by Mary McAleese, President of Ireland as she narrated memories of her childhood in Belfast to a group of missionaries. 'There was little space in those days for modern day concerns about cultural diversity or religious imposition. Even if there had been, no doubt we would have stared blankly in amazement. For the world I grew up in was one of very stark divisions and *utter certainties*. It was a world where on the same narrow

street, Catholics and Protestants lived side by side, yet a world apart. For my family God was male, Irish and Catholic. For my Protestant friends, God was still male – no gender bending allowed – but with *equal certainty*, they knew him to be Protestant and British.’

There is nothing as unsettling as migration – the movement of people from all corners of the earth. This is particularly worrying in times of economic crisis. There are three prominent groups of migrants. Firstly there are those who are seeking sanctuary (asylum) because of war, persecution and various forms of conflict in their home countries. The second group are the victims of climate change causing disasters that have led to their sudden or gradual displacement. The third group is mainly a result of the global economic inequalities. Thus migrants have left their countries of origin for various political, economic, social and religious reasons. They belong to a multitude of faiths or none. They have many and varied stories to tell. This situation causes uncertainties for both migrant and host populations and if we want to build bridges rather than barriers, we will need to listen to these many and varied stories.

One of the striking features in the gospel is how Jesus never ceases to tell stories. Much of his teaching emerges through storytelling. In his stories or parables Jesus invites us to enter the world of meals, dinner

parties, wedding feasts, gardening and cooking, broken families, judges, tax-collectors and daily encounters of rich, healthy, sick and poor people. It is often at the level of these very ordinary events narrated in simple stories that our salvation and happiness finds expression. Stories are often full of the unexpected and the unexplained but they help us to express our emotions and what lies deep in our hearts. They provide us with a vehicle through which to express ourselves at moments of pain and turmoil. For Jesus storytelling was not about entertaining people with harmless niceties. His parables were often subversive and they were meant to confront and challenge and to invite to conversion. Jesus was executed not because he entertained people with harmless, bedtime stories but because he told *dangerous stories* that radically challenged their exclusive understanding of God’s reign. In other words Jesus wanted a world in which all people’s stories could be taken seriously.

In the gospel reading for this Sunday (Luke 15) we have before our eyes and our ears a context of uncertainty. Jesus was not only a good story teller; he also loved to share table companionship with everyone irrespective of their status in society and religion. We have two groups surrounding Jesus. First, there are tax collectors and sinners. These are the outcasts and outraged. They are bad company according to the religious rules of the time. Then there are

Pharisees and Scribes. These are murmuring and complaining about Jesus' behaviour of eating and drinking with anyone. Unlike Jesus they pride themselves of keeping a safe distance from the outcasts. They are good at building barriers. It is in this context that Jesus tells three 'subversive' stories: the parables of 'the lost sheep', 'the lost coin' and 'the lost son'. And in all these three stories Jesus likens God to one who rejoices when what is lost is found. God is likened to a shepherd, to a woman and to a father. God *builds bridges not barriers*. God is not one who tells people to 'get lost' but one who is keen on seeking them. This is subversive teaching. It radically challenges any law, any religion, any church and any society that excludes others because of their gender, race, religion, economic status or background.

This kind of behaviour and teaching was unheard of. It was subversive and it turned things upside down. It was new but it gave the people of his time as it does for us today an invitation to share in the vision of God's reign that Jesus lived, suffered and died for. It gives us the freedom to dream and create connections, to build bridges rather than barriers.

It may be that in our world, so full of cracks, barriers and uncertainties we need a different kind of listening: listening to the stories and experiences of the 'other', the marginalised, the migrant who unsettles us and does not look or speak like us; listening to the

'eccentric' (were the prophets not often declared eccentric?), listening to secular movements of liberation, listening to people of other faiths, listening to the stories and aspirations of so many young people who have a strong sense of justice but have often been disillusioned by politicians and the institutional Church, listening to their apathy, listening to women who are often the greatest victims of exclusion caused by migration and racism and listening to the contribution of women's spirituality. Society needs to listen to the stories of migrants and people seeking sanctuary (asylum) who come with their indigenous spiritualities. Of course discernment will be necessary. There is a lot of creativity in all this and we need to listen to this creativity. But let us not be cautious of this, in such a way that we stifle the Spirit of God. We will learn to be attentive to the many voices and to the many stories being told today and to form alliances with the excluded. As Christians we will acknowledge our participation in the multiple identities of our existence. Thus the language of inclusiveness will become the point of intersection between the Church and the world, politics and religion.

Suggested Hymn for Racial Justice Sunday 2010

Brother, sister, let me serve you

Brother, sister, let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant too

We are pilgrims on a journey
We are brothers on the road
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load

I will hold the Christ light for you
In the night-time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long to hear

I will weep when you are weeping
When you laugh, I'll laugh with you
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've know together
Of Christ's love and agony

Brother, sister, let me serve you
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant too.

by Richard Gillard (1977)
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Other Hymns

Song Title	Writer	Hymn Book/Source	Tune
One bread, one body	John B Foley, SJ	Laudate No.832 Celebration Hymnal No. 578	
The Church's one foundation	S. J. Stone	Laudate No. 830 Celebration Hymnal No.688	
Whatsoever you do	W. F. Jabusch	Laudate No. 926 Celebration Hymnal No. 799	
My song is love unknown	Samuel Crossman	Laudate No. 752 Celebration Hymnal No. 503	
We are one in the spirit	Peter Scholtes	Celebration Hymnal No. 769	
Put peace into each others hands	Fred Kaan	Rejoice and Sing Hymn Book No. 635	St. Columba
This we can do for justice and peace	Brian Wren	Rejoice and Sing Hymn Book No. 639	Gaudium et Spes
All are welcome	Marty Haugen	Laudate No. 458	

Jesus where can we find you?	Doreen Potter	Drawn to Wonder Hymn Book No. 24	
For such a time as this	Laveta Hilton	Worshipping Ecumenically page 134	
The church is like a table	Fred Kaan	Drawn to Wonder Hymn Book No. 13	Holly Lane
When Israel was in Egypt's land	African American Spiritual	Rejoice and Sing Hymn Book No.643	Go Down Moses
Come now o prince of peace (O-So-So) Korean	Marion Pope	Drawn to Wonder Hymn Book No.26	

Suggested Prayers for Racial Justice Sunday 2010

Prayers of the Faithful

We pray today for those who have been forced to leave their homes and families because of persecution and discrimination and those affected by war or political violence. May we always be ready to welcome the stranger in our midst, to offer them compassionate support at what is a very difficult time of their lives.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We pray, with gratitude, for the many gifts refugees bring to this country and ask You to help us to be more tolerant and understanding of different cultures and customs so that all may feel able to use their gifts, achieve their potential and feel part of our family.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We remember very especially those who are persecuted for their religion, especially those held in prisons and we ask you to give strength and guidance to those organisations working to challenge governments who abuse human rights.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer

We remember, with compassion, victims of torture who have come to this country seeking sanctuary. May we always be understanding and generous in our hospitality, helping those who have suffered to feel the healing presence of Christ and the love and welcome of our parishes.

Lord in your mercy: Hear our prayer.

A Prayer of Solidarity: (Together)

God of mercy and compassion, we bring forth into your presence all the communities that are experiencing segregation, discrimination and oppression based on caste, class, creed, colour and gender both in the church in the society. It is your death on the cross that has put an end to all enmity by breaking down the walls that separate us. We ask you to empower us O Lord, to tear down the fences of hatred and indifference. Liberate us from the bonds of pride and self-seeking. Enable and strengthen us to overcome our prejudices and fears. Grant us your courage to open ourselves to others, so that we may continue to live in solidarity with the oppressed communities. Amen.

National Council of Churches in India, Dalit Liberation Sunday 2009

The CARJ Prayer

Heavenly God, we praise your name and thank you for your glorious goodness and mercy.

Lord Jesus, we pray a blessing for all those actively engaged in the struggle for racial justice.

Holy Spirit, we beseech you to enter into the minds and hearts of all those in authority in the Church.

Grant that they may

Hear the voices crying out for justice

Engage in developing a better understanding

Act to bring about change

Lead and inspire others by their good example.

We ask this through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The love of God is greater than all evil.

We pray for racial justice:

- in our lives
- in our parishes
- in our dioceses
- in our land. Amen.

Betty Luckham (Catholic Association for Racial Justice)

Activities for Children & Young People



For Children

1. Activity - Feeling left out

This poem was written by a ten-year-old girl. Read it through and then think of five reasons why you have sometimes felt left out and five reasons you have felt included. On a separate sheet of paper, write them down as in the poem below. You could also draw pictures to go with them.

Feeling left out

I felt excluded because of my colour
I felt excluded because I was new to school
I felt excluded because I wear glasses
I felt excluded because the children called me nasty names
I felt excluded because of the way I dress
I felt excluded because of the way I talk and my accent
I felt included because I had become their friend
I felt included because my friends did not tease me because I wear glasses
I felt included because my friend did not say anything nasty about my colour
I felt included because the children did not pick on me and call me nasty names
I felt included because they knew me.

Where it really matters (Epstein and Sealey, 1990), Refugee Council.

2. Activity - Researching multi-ethnic Britain - a fight to belong

Use a map of your local area and a map of Preston as a case study. This activity links friendship with the concept of living in diverse communities and helps to foster an interest in such diversity. The following information looks at Britain as a multi-ethnic community, using the example of Preston as a case study. An extension of this work involves examining the 2001 Census to find out about ethnic groups in your local neighbourhood. These activities encourage children to regard themselves as citizens of a wider community

which includes people from all over the world - from our Global Communities. This work will also contribute towards developing a positive attitude towards all migrants.

Case Study of Preston

The Lancashire town of Preston, roughly in the middle of the United Kingdom, is at a crossroads between north and south, east and west. Preston is an example of a British town which has attracted people from many different countries over the centuries. Settlers there include people from Scotland, Ireland, Scandinavia, Poland, the Ukraine, Africa (especially Uganda), the Caribbean, South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), China and Jewish people. They have all brought their own cultural traditions with them, enriching the life of the town. For instance, Preston has a Caribbean carnival each year which is the second biggest in the UK. People came to Preston mainly to look for work, or to escape persecution or famine in their own country. 'I heard this programme on the radio the other day and it was about national cuisine. Apparently the most national dish in Britain was chicken madras. That tells you a lot really.'

Questions

- ❖ What does the group think about the example of Preston? Is it different or similar to your local area?
- ❖ Children could find out what different countries people have come from to their own area in the past, and why they came.
- ❖ They could mark these countries on a world map with the dates of their emigration.
- ❖ As an extension, they could research more details about one or more of the countries of origin of the people in the area.

Quoted in Moving Stories: A History of Settlement in Preston, Refugee Council



Food is one way we can find out where local people in our area come from:

- ❖ Children can note down how many different restaurants there are in their area, e.g. Italian, Indian, Chinese, Turkish etc.
- ❖ They can also find out what specialist food shops or supermarket food counters there are in the area, e.g. Japanese, Greek, Jewish etc.
- ❖ Ask a local restaurant owner to come and speak to the class about the origins of his food and why he has opened a restaurant locally.

Most countries that used to be part of the British Empire are now independent but remain part of the **Commonwealth** which now has 54 members. Children can find out more about the Commonwealth and its members. Can they name most of the former British colonies for example Ghana, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Nigeria, Dominica, Malaysia, Kenya, India, Uganda, Jamaica, South Africa, Singapore and Zambia etc? They can investigate how the UK or the local area has been influenced by countries that were formerly colonies. Or, as a contrast, children may wish to find out how countries which were British colonies have been

influenced by Britain, for example through the language, education, religion, institutions etc.

Food for thought

You may wish to use some of the following points during a follow-up discussion:

- ❖ People from the Caribbean helped to rebuild our cities after the war
- ❖ Many doctors and nurses in this country originally came from abroad
- ❖ There were four black players in England's 1998 World Cup football squad
- ❖ Many different foods and products that we take for granted originate from other parts of the world. For example, potatoes and tomatoes originally from South America, tea comes from India, glass was invented in Egypt, paper was invented in China, and even fish and chips were brought to the UK in the 17th century by Jewish refugees.



For Young People - challenging stereotypes of refugees

1. Activity - myths and facts

Ask small groups to think of myths/stories they were told when younger, e.g. the tooth fairy, the stork brought you, I've got eyes in the back of my head, if you tell a lie your nose will grow etc. (They may think of fairy tales and legends too).

Discussion questions

Why do you think you were told the story? To make you feel happy/scared? To make you

do/not do something? Because the person telling you believed it themselves? Or felt embarrassed? Or didn't want you to know something? Why do young children believe the myths they are told? Can you think of any myths that adults believe? In what ways can myths be beneficial? Can they be harmful?

Myths and facts about young people

Ask young people to think of examples of how young people are stereotyped. Recent examples include the 2005 election campaigning on 'job culture' and the banning of 'hoodies' in large shopping centres. What do they feel about this?

Discussion questions on refugees

- ❖ What image is given of 'refugees'?
- ❖ How can you decide what is myth and what is fact?
- ❖ Why do some people stereotype refugees negatively?
- ❖ Do you think newspaper headlines influence their readers' attitudes to refugees?
- ❖ What other groups are sometimes stereotyped and treated unfairly?
- ❖ What makes some groups powerful and others powerless?
- ❖ Can belonging to a group be dangerous to those 'inside' or 'outside' the group?

2. Activity - newspaper myths and facts

Consider these claims in the newspapers about sanctuary/asylum seekers. How do we know if they are based on myth or fact?

‘so-called asylum-seekers who in reality seek no more than access to our welfare system’

Leader comment, *Sunday Express*, 2 May 2004

‘Asylum crime fear’

News of the World, 30 January 2005

‘One in five flock here; asylum: we’re too damn soft’

Daily Star, January 2004

Myths

Most sanctuary/asylum-seekers come from countries where they are safe

Some sanctuary/asylum-seekers repay our generosity by thieving in town and city centres

Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers take our housing

Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers are here illegally

The influx of refugees is threatening to swamp the UK

Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers get huge state handouts

3. Activity - distinguishing myths and facts about refugees

Below each myth is linked to a fact and you have to work out which is related to the other

Facts

Under the 1951 Refugee Convention, people have the right to apply for asylum – the UK is obliged to examine their case

Between 2000 and 2002, the UK received 1.9 asylum applications per 1,100 inhabitants

Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers are not usually allowed to claim benefits. If supported, a single adult has to survive on £38.96 a week

Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers have no right to permanent housing. They are usually housed in temporary, sub-standard accommodation

Most Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers coming to the UK are fleeing countries where there is war and human rights abuses

Sanctuary/Asylum-seekers commit no more crime than anyone else does though violence and crime is often directed at them

Personal Stories from Migrants in Britain & Ireland



Personal Stories from Migrants in Britain & Ireland

Jane a migrant living in Ireland

Jane is an African-American woman, has been living and working in Donegal, Ireland for decades and has full citizenship. When she travels to Dublin by bus she is sometimes targeted by immigration officials who regularly carry out spot checks at the border with Northern Ireland. She feels that the only basis for her being selected over others is her skin colour.

A young Nigerian couple living in Wales

A young Nigerian couple live in Wrexham with their two children. She had refugee status so was allowed to remain while he was an asylum-seeker whose request to remain was under investigation. She was unable to care for her children due to mental depression so the father had assumed most of the parental responsibilities. On one of his regular visits to the local police station to register he was picked up by the immigration police and placed in detention with a view to his being

returned to Nigeria. The children had to be placed in foster care and the mother was left distraught and vulnerable. After urgent legal representation and several telephone calls from local support agencies the father was eventually released and the family was re-united.

Aslem a refugee from Afghanistan living in England

People were so unhelpful. They could see easily that I was someone who needed help, but I was not given any. It was as if everyone wanted me to go back to where I started and not be a problem. It was difficult to get an interpreter, it was difficult to get a hostel. Everything was so much trouble and I felt as if I was giving people a lot of hard work and that is not a nice feeling. If they are there to help people, why make them feel bad about getting that help? I knew very little English and had to ask other people from my country to tell me things over and over again. I was so confused and had to get used to everything from the money to trains and buses. Even the names and faces of people were confusing. When you are a new student, and you are trying to understand what teachers are saying, it is difficult if the others are shouting and playing. And it is even more difficult if it is you they are joking about.

Melitta, a refugee from Mozambique living in Ireland

The people you know and trust and who can answer your questions all say goodbye when you leave your country. They cannot say what you will see when you get here and so you come and you are by yourself and this part is never ever talked of. You think the war and the problems back home are now finished but here your other problems really start.



A young Ethiopian girl living in Wales

The Wrexham Asylum Refugee Support Group (WRASS) has been supporting a young Ethiopian girl who has been made homeless by the UK Border Agency while she awaits the outcome of her appeal to remain in Britain. This has resulted in a lot of stress to her.

David a church minister from India living in Scotland

It was summer 2005 that my wife and I came to Glasgow, Scotland. Coming from India, the sub-continent, we had a few cultural shocks in the first few months. Being a committed Christian, Church is part and parcel of my life. The Church we visited on the first Sunday of our arrival was a significant one. I say it because we were accepted by the congregation. The brothers and sisters in the assembly made us feel at home.

Naturally, when you are in a foreign land, everything is new to you like place, people and surroundings. You will feel isolated. In my case, it wasn't true because the Church played a vital role in giving us support. I have noticed and personally experienced the Churches not only preach love but reveal it in deeds. Christ's love is demonstrated in the action of churches. I can testify in volumes how the churches here are involved in helping people to provide food, clothing and shelter.

Melake a refugee from Ethiopia living in England

Immigration responses need to be faster and more humane to believe people when they say their age and that. Schools should have teachers who understand that children come from different education systems, and people in general should not think of all refugees as lying in order to stay here, especially like things they say in the news and newspapers.

Carmen an economic migrant from the Philippines living in England

I am a nursing assistant. I really like my job and am grateful for the opportunities that working in the UK has given me. Through my trade union I know the UK has a falling birth rate and an ageing population. If there were not migrant workers, the work simply wouldn't get done. So without migrant workers the public services would be in real trouble. Migrant workers make up 19% of social workers, 16% of care workers, 11% of housing/welfare workers, and 10% of nursing assistants, 8% of education assistants. So in total, around 13% of all workers in health, education and public administration are migrants.

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