



**MSC JPIC Group**

**Autumn Campaign 2010**

***Welcoming the Stranger***

*October 24<sup>th</sup> 2010 has been nominated by the United Nations as the special day to focus on Migration. It might be an opportunity for us, in our various ministries and community settings, to engage in some reflection on the migrants in our midst and how well we, as communities, parishes or individual MSCs, are welcoming the stranger.*

*To help in this reflection process, and possibly encourage some activities and action, the MSC Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation group (JPIC) offers the following simple collection of ideas, suggestions and resources.*

### **Some quotes from our tradition**

"I was a stranger and you welcomed me into your house." "When did we see you a stranger and welcome you?" "Whenever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." **Matthew 25:36,38,40**

"As society becomes ever more globalised, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers."

**Caritas in Veritate**, 19, Encyclical of Benedict XVI, 2009

"It is important that communities do not think that they have completed their duty to migrants simply by performing acts of fraternal assistance or even by supporting legislation aimed at giving them their due place in society while respecting their identity as foreigners. Christians must in fact promote an authentic *culture of welcome* capable of accepting the truly human values of the immigrants over and above any difficulties caused by living together with persons who are different."

**The love of Christ towards migrants**, 39, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, Vatican City, 2004.

"He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17) Everyone knows that the Fathers of the Church laid down the duty of the rich toward the poor in no uncertain terms. As St. Ambrose put it: "You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich."

**Populorum Progressio**, 23, Encyclical of Pope Paul VI on the Development of Peoples, 1967

## To get ourselves thinking....

Who are the new neighbours in our area?  
Where do they live?  
Where have they come from?  
What is their story?  
Have we met them or spoken to them?  
Why have they come?  
What do they need?  
What can they offer? What is their gift?  
What is their experience of being here?  
Who can they call "friend"?  
How many of the new migrants are children? What is their experience?  
What is the community's/neighbourhood's perception and experience of the newcomers?  
What have been the areas of tension/conflict between the host community and the newcomers?  
What is our experience of them/with them?  
How do we welcome their hospitality?  
How do they both enrich and challenge the community now? What could it be like?  
How can they enrich and challenge me?  
How can I/we become catalysts for welcome and change?

## Who might the strangers be?

- A new-comer to the neighbourhood from a different part of the same country (or even the same city!)
- Someone recently released into the local community from prison.
- Someone recently returned from living overseas.
- An overseas student who will be here for just a few years.
- Someone on a fixed term overseas placement with their international company.
- An economic migrant from within the EU community with freedom to travel, in search of new opportunity, maybe intending to stay and put down roots, maybe intending to return after a few years.
- An economic migrant from outside the EU, often from much poorer countries, with hopes of a new life for themselves and their family.
- A refugee who, "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside his/her country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail him/her-self of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his/her former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to return to it." (Geneva Convention Definition).
- An asylum seeker who leaves their country to move to another country, where they feel they will be protected. Usually these are people who have lodged a claim with the Government and are waiting to find out if they can stay in the country. If they are allowed to stay they are given official "Refugee Status".

- Someone who has been trafficked from another country with the promise of work or medical assistance and is now forced into exploitative labour, prostitution, begging or crime.

### **Some ideas and strategies for welcoming the stranger - as MSC communities, parishes or just as individuals**

- First of all - know your own locality! Who are the strangers in your midst? Who are the welcome ones and who are the unwelcome ones? Why?
- Come to identify and understand some of the major issues, anxieties and concerns for migrants.
- Identify local projects, amenities, networks, legal services and resources so that you can signpost practical assistance.
- Join a local network which offers befriending and/or support for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Consider offering space for newcomers to meet, chat and share tea/coffee/food...
- If you are working in a parish encourage all parishioners, new and old, to meet socially (after mass for a cup of tea/coffee or during the week), to break down barriers and expand an inclusive community.
- Encourage the parish to identify the range and diversity of nationalities and cultures in its congregation. Name it and celebrate it in some way.
- Be sure to identify the giftedness of newcomers and encourage them to share their gifts and talents.
- Host an "International Evening" where parishioners can share food, music, costume, dance and culture from their country of origin.
- Highlight World Migration Day (24<sup>th</sup> October 2010) or Refugee Week (20-26<sup>th</sup> June 2011).
- Explore practical ways of assistance – e.g. buying weekly supermarket vouchers from Asylum Seekers so that they have the cash to spend where they want.
- Hold a special liturgy which celebrates unity in diversity.
- Identify ways in which the gift of different cultural expressions (song, dance, ritual) can be incorporated more regularly into liturgy.
- Consider hosting a reflection evening on the issue of asylum seekers and refugees. Don't be afraid of tackling the difficult issues; prejudice, racism, media coverage, negative experiences of the host community, etc..
- Encourage the parish Justice and Peace group to adopt the issue of "strangers in our midst" as a topic for reflection and action.
- Encourage the young people of the parish (youth group?) and/or school(s) to reflect on the experience of migration – what is it like to be a young migrant or a newcomer? How easy is it to make friends? How are young migrants discriminated against, bullied, excluded or marginalised at school or in the community?
- Offer an opportunity for newcomers to tell their story – either at mass or in small group settings.
- Offer an opportunity for the diversity of ethnicity and culture in the parish to be celebrated in art, poetry, song and dance.
- As an MSC community, an individual or a parish, join a national campaign for promoting the rights of refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers or trafficked peoples.
- Join up with other religious communities, neighbouring parishes, other Christian Churches and other faith groups to establish a local befriending service of refugees and asylum seekers.

## Some Useful Resources

### *Websites for information and networking:*

- General      Amnesty International – [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)  
Embrace – [www.embraceni.org](http://www.embraceni.org)  
Human Trafficking – [www.humantrafficking.org](http://www.humantrafficking.org)  
Jesuit Refugee Service – [www.jrs.net](http://www.jrs.net)
- UK sites      Citizens For Sanctuary – [www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk](http://www.citizensforsanctuary.org.uk)  
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants – [www.jcwi.org.uk](http://www.jcwi.org.uk)  
Refugee Action – [www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)  
Refugee and Migrant Justice – [www.refugee-legal-centre.org.uk](http://www.refugee-legal-centre.org.uk)  
Refugee Council – [www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)  
Strangers into Citizens Campaign – [www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk](http://www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk)
- Irish sites      Citizens Information Ireland – [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie)  
Economic and Social Research Institute - [www.esri.ie](http://www.esri.ie)  
Irish Refugee Council – [www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie](http://www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie)  
Legal Aid Board – [www.legalaidboard.ie](http://www.legalaidboard.ie)  
Migrant Rights Centre Ireland – [www.mrci.ie](http://www.mrci.ie)  
Refugee Information Service – [www.ris.ie](http://www.ris.ie)

### *YouTube Video Clips:*

#### **RETURNING HOME**

If this was the welcome you were expecting, would you go home?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWR0tKSQ41U&feature=related>

#### **THE DESTITUTION TRAP**

Powerful short film by Refugee Action featuring destitute refused asylum seekers talking about the devastating impact destitution has had on their lives, and their fears of returning home.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0-3IMOB4io&feature=related>

#### **IMMIGRATION IS SLAVERY**

Short news article from RTE - Immigration into Ireland can be seen for what it really is Slavery!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpJeYvUhebl>

#### **STUDENTS DEFINE REFUGE**

Thanks go out to this happy bunch from Student Action for Refugees who made this little video:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eseQs9xWyE8&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eseQs9xWyE8&feature=player_embedded)

#### **KIDS WELCOME ASYLUM SEEKERS**

A short video clip made by child asylum seekers and sponsored by Oxfam

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1JxvzbzX4IU>

## **SIMPLE ACTS ANIMATION**

This simple little animation reminds us that it only takes one Simple Act to change the way we see refugees, and ourselves...

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6csPOTDOVTQ&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6csPOTDOVTQ&feature=player_embedded)

### ***Publications:***

**Encountering “the Other”**, Jean Vanier, Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2005

**Welcoming the Stranger: Practising Hospitality in Contemporary Ireland**, Andrew G McGrady (Ed), Veritas Publications, 2006

**The Stranger: Biblical perspectives on racism, migration, asylum and cross-community issues**, Kieran J O’Mahony OSA, Irish Inter-Church Meeting, 2009

**God In Exile:** Towards a shared spirituality with refugees (Jesuit Refugee Service) – can be downloaded at <http://www.jrs.net/news/index.php?lang=en&sid=442>

**No Longer Strangers.** Cultural Integration in Church and Society in Ireland. *Doctrine & Life* Special Issue October and November 2006

***The love of Christ towards migrants (Erga migrantes caritas Christi)*** PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, Vatican City, 2004. Can be downloaded at: [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/migrants/documents/rc\\_pc\\_migrants\\_doc\\_20040514\\_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/documents/rc_pc_migrants_doc_20040514_erga-migrantes-caritas-christi_en.html)

**Mission of the Church to Migrants in England and Wales**, Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales, 2008. Can be downloaded at: [http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/assets/pdf/Pastoral\\_Statement\\_on\\_Migrants\\_Apr08.pdf](http://www.birminghamjandp.org.uk/assets/pdf/Pastoral_Statement_on_Migrants_Apr08.pdf)

### **Evaluation:**

We would really like to know how you found the resources in this pack and how you made use of them.

At some time before the end of November 2010 would you take a few minutes to complete the brief online evaluation survey here: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KNKVKFB>. Thank-you.



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***on behalf of the MSC Irish Province JPIC Group (Ireland and UK)  
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