

St. James Cathedral Immigrant Assistance



"Every stranger that knocks at our door is an opportunity to meet Jesus Christ."
Pope Francis

A Reflection on Refugees

I try to follow where Pope Francis *goes*, as well as what he *says*. His travels stand out as actions of *witness*.

In early December Pope Francis traveled to Cyprus and Greece, returning again to the Greek island of Lesbos, where Francis visited in 2016. Lesbos lies close to Turkey and has held a large camp of refugees since the Syrian civil war began ten years ago. Francis visited the refugee camp, asking the world (that means *us*) not to turn our attention away from the refugees, but help the Greek people serve the refugees and help the refugees find permanent homes all over Europe. Just visiting the refugee camp is an act of witness, bringing visibility to their situation. In Cyprus, an island nation with many more refugees, Francis collaborated with the lay Catholic community of Sant 'Egidio to bring

12 refugees home to Italy. This too was an act of witness – helping real people and pointing to so much more that could be done to resettle people.

Francis is witnessing to what he has said and written for years about caring for refugees, and he is witnessing to his belief in Christmas. We may associate Christmas with being home, but the Christmas story is really about *being away from home* and those who have no home. Joseph and Mary travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The Magi travel from the East to Bethlehem. Shepherds moved constantly with their sheep and goats seeking water. After Jesus is born, the Holy Family become refugees themselves, fleeing to Egypt for safety. I gather with friends and family at home to *celebrate* Christmas, but to *witness* to Christmas is to reach out and serve refugees, immigrants, and the homeless.

I don't have to travel to Greece to encounter refugees and find out how I can help. Refugees from Afghanistan and elsewhere are arriving here in Puget Sound. I wish others peace at Christmas, and Francis gives us a path to that peace in *Fratelli Tutti*: "*We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing, and work for all. This is the true path of peace.*" (No. 127) It starts no further than the place we celebrate Christmas: *We can work on a small scale, in our own neighborhood, but with a larger perspective. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all.*" (No. 145)

When I read his writings, I ask, "What does he *ask* me to do?" When I watch or read about his witness, I ask myself, "What does he *inspire* me to do?"

Join our Refugee Welcome Team!

Support a newly arrived refugee family by helping out with household supplies, clothing, helping the family learn about their new community, assisting with transportation, tutoring English, etc.. But most of all build a lasting circle of friendship. Contact Erica de Klerk, Refugee Welcome Coordinator, at edeklerk@stjames-cathedral.org or 206-382-4511

Help an immigrant learn English, prepare for their citizenship interview, provide support to staff, or share your expertise. Check out our website for more information

Volunteer!

Join the Immigrant Assistance
mailing list



Stay up to date by receiving our Immigration Updates and Alerts.

Go to www.stjames-cathedral.org/immigrant and scroll to the bottom of the page.