

DIOCESAN RESPONSE TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS

NOTICE TO BE READ OUT IN PARISHES OVER THE WEEKEND OF 23RD/24TH FEBRUARY 2019 TO SUPPORT THE RETIRING COLLECTION.

Many of us continue to be moved by the plight of so many families and children forced out of their homes and countries through no fault of their own fleeing war and poverty, risking their lives and those of their children to find safety and sanctuary.

The Catholic Church has much to offer but, as a Diocese we did not want to work just on our own and, right from the start recognised that our response would be much more effective working in collaboration with others. Since October 2015 the response from organisations, charities and individual parishioners from our Diocese has been inspirational and plentiful, reaching out to the most marginalised in our society.

The Plight of the Refugee is still with us, it has not gone away.

In 2018 115,000 people crossed the Mediterrean Sea, a crossing described as deadlier than ever. And now we hear that in 2018 539 people attempted to cross the English Channel, 230 of these since November. The language used is not welcoming or friendly in fact quite the opposite with the channel crossings being described as a "Major Incident".

Families arrive in the most tragic of circumstances, frightened, alone and traumatised. Just a few weeks ago Catholic Care's Gianna project started to support a family seeking safety; a pregnant mother and her two children who had witnessed the murder of their father and grandparents. Later this pregnant mother was set alight and left to burn to death. She is here now in Yorkshire seeking kindness and help'

All this is taking place in a climate of increasing hate crime and concerns around all forms of radicalisation, especially as Brexit looms closer. There is a need to increase support for positive community cohesion and integration. The services provided throughout the Diocese are needed more than ever.

Today the Diocesan Refugee Support Group is appealing for funds to enable it to keep supporting this very vulnerable group of people who are so lonely, frightened and desolate.

Over the next 2 years we aim to:

1. To retain the post of co-ordinator to continue her valuable work.

2. To continue to support destitute asylum seekers as we have been doing for a number of years
3. To have 5 parishes become Community Sponsors and welcome, as a parish community, a Syrian refugee family.

Pope Francis asks us to awaken our conscience, to see the face of Christ in the human faces of those in need. Works of charity are at the heart of our faith.

Such charitable works cannot take place without your support. By standing together in solidarity with the poorest of our brothers and sisters we can work in partnership to bring about what Pope Francis refers to as a "Poor Church for the Poor".

Please take a newsletter with you today can find out the practical steps being undertaken in the Diocese and how you can become involved.

Please give as generously as you can in today's very special appeal.