



## **Refugees Digest 16** **May 2017**

### **Refugees, Migrants and Displaced Persons**

At the General Audience on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1017 Pope Francis called the flood of migrants and refugees the greatest tragedy since World War II. He made the comments during the presence in Rome of the EU Heads of State meeting commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Signing of the Treaty of Rome. At the meeting with the Heads of State he urged them to fight the rising tide of populism and false security which closes the door on migrants and refugees. He cautioned them against yielding to fear in the face of the migrant crises. The Vatican has once again welcomed three refugee families to Rome offering accommodation in Vatican owned apartments. All the while stories continue to emerge of the gross exploitation of foreign migrants in Europe as in other parts of the world. Recently Pope Francis' reference to some of the detention centres for refugees as being like 'concentration camps' caused some furore.

Of particular concern is the ongoing vulnerability of refugee children. In Europe, Germany for example youth are being issued with 'subsidiary protection' which amongst other restrictions only allows for resident permits for a year instead of the three year permits issued to those with refugee status. It also offers no right for youth to apply for their families to be reunited with them less it create 'perverse incentives.' The USA State Department has also added a requirement for a police clearance certificate for Mexicans over the age of 18 seeking a visa to cross into the USA.

One of the theological categories being explored by many theologians and faith based activists in the migrant and refugee domain, is the notion of sanctuary. The Bishops of the USA have also called for increased advocacy at all levels with public representatives. The Archdiocese of Mexico City has warned that those who co-operate in the building of the Wall between Mexico and the USA would be acting immorally. Also of significance on the theological landscape has been the criteria set forth by the Lutheran Church in the USA for assessing policy and legislative proposals. In his book, 'Baptised for This Moment' Stephen Paul Bouman sets forth the Lutheran criteria.

- Does the proposal promote family unity?
- Does the proposal promote human rights and worker rights?
- Does the proposal enable those without status to come out of the shadows and live without fear?
- Does the proposal provide for a path to permanence, so that the immigrant can become a full member of society?

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