

# MISSION OF THE CHURCH TO MIGRANTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Over the last few years, there has been a transformation of the social character of the dioceses in England and Wales. Across the country in all our dioceses, we have migrants from nearly every continent in the world, adding people and vibrancy to our parishes. We the Bishops of England and Wales have been considering this new social reality with a view to issuing a statement calling for a more visible culture of welcome, hospitality and solidarity with our migrant sisters and brothers in God's family. We recognise and celebrate their rich cultural and spiritual patrimony and the ways in which they are enriching us as they join us in our parishes and dioceses. This statement, *'Mission of the Church to Migrants in England and Wales'* is the result.

## 1. AN OVERVIEW

Migration of people, both voluntary and involuntary “*has turned into a structural reality of contemporary society*”.<sup>1</sup> It is a global phenomenon, touching all regions, crossing all ecclesiastical and national boundaries and it affects millions of human beings. As has been the case throughout history, migration is conditioned by a combination of the attraction exerted by the countries of destination ('pull' factors) and the forces which prompt people to move or flee from their countries viz. conflicts, human rights violations, economic deprivation and environmental or ecological disasters ('push' factors). Last year we celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Pope Paul VI's powerful encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the development of Peoples). In this encyclical Pope Paul VI called on Catholics, and all people of goodwill, to stand up for the lives and dignity of poor and vulnerable not only in our own societies but around the world. In particular, he called on us to be in solidarity with those who seek to “*escape from hunger, misery, endemic disease and ignorance*”.<sup>2</sup> This call remains valid today, given that the United Nations (UN) estimates the global migrant population to be around 150 million, many of whom are in very vulnerable situations.<sup>3</sup>

Migration today, especially for us in the European Union (EU), is both a feature of the EU's enlargement, as well as what is commonly described as globalisation - that is the ongoing restructuring of national and international economic life that has accelerated the circulation of labour, capital, culture and information worldwide.<sup>4</sup> The needs of one country, either due to economic growth, a downturn or underdevelopment, affect the towns, cities and parishes in another. In Britain for example, a shortage of labour in the construction industry, the health service or in the service sector, is a job opportunity for a builder from Poland, a nurse from India, a carer from the Philippines or a waiter from Portugal. Merchant seafarers are another group of workers who are by definition not migrants, but Vatican II in reading the “*signs of the times*”, included them for special concern.<sup>5</sup> The current trend in migratory movement has three other prominent characteristics:

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<sup>1</sup> a) Dicastery Instruction (presentation): *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (Love of Christ towards Migrants, 2004).

b) For the sake of limiting the scope of this Statement, we make an arbitrary distinction between “refugee” and “migrant”, the former being one who for whatever reason or combination of reasons leaves home *involuntarily*, while the latter does so *voluntarily*. Both categories of people have a claim on the Church's compassion, but the special claim of refugees is not the subject of this Statement. For the Church's Statement on Refugees see ‘The Dispossessed’, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Populorum Progressio* (The Development of Peoples, 1967- no.1)

<sup>3</sup> Statistics from the UN established Global Commission on International Migration, October 2005.

<sup>4</sup> For a more comprehensive definition of globalisation see Paragraphs 361-363 of the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Vatican II - *Christus Dominus* (Decree concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, no.18 – special concern must be shown to those faithful who, owing to a way of life characterised by human mobility, “*are not adequately catered for by the ordinary pastoral ministry of the parochial clergy or are entirely deprived of it.*” The

First, the contradictory attitudes of governments, particularly those of the developed countries that impose restrictive immigration policies and draconian ‘deterrence’ measures to stop the movement of migrants, while at the same time seek to recruit skilled migrants from developing countries. Such policies are unwittingly driving more and more non-skilled migrants into the hands of human smugglers and traffickers.<sup>6</sup> We are also deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives in our own country and around the Mediterranean as desperate migrants attempt to get into the EU. The Church will continue to advocate ‘regular legal channels’ of migration and the strict observation of international laws and norms to protect and support all migrant workers and their families.<sup>7</sup>

Second, as the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in his first World Migration Day message in 2006, there is an increasing ‘*feminisation of migration and how women are migrating alone*’. According to the United Nations, women constitute almost 50% of the world’s migrants. The special vulnerability of women must be recognised, especially those without skills or education and/or raising children alone, as they are the ones who are often targeted by traffickers and smugglers for domestic slavery and sexual exploitation. Few governments however take into account the element of gender in designing their migration policies. We applaud the UK government for signing and ratifying the *2004 European Convention Against Trafficking*, – the only international law that guarantees the protection and support of all victims of trafficking.

Third, the evolution of multi-cultural and multi-religious societies in all the major metropolitan centres in developed countries. These pluralistic new social formations, often portrayed negatively by sections of the media, have stimulated public anxiety, xenophobia and even racism. We stress that the Catholic Church rejects racism in all its forms, including the anti-migrant rhetoric increasingly popular in some parts of the country particularly during electoral periods. We reiterate what we said in 1980: “*Racism compromises our Catholic identity. It defaces the image of Jesus the Saviour of mankind*”<sup>8</sup> We will monitor carefully the implementation of the *2006 Equalities Act*, to ensure that the new emphasis on human rights in relation to diversities of national origin, ethnicity, gender and religious beliefs is always respected.

Recent media reports and surveys suggest that the British public is not generally in favour of migration, despite the many benefits it brings to Britain. Public concern is frequently generated by the perception that the migration system is “out of control.” We take seriously the concerns about the scope and scale of migration and its impact on the public services of our country, including the security issues involved. We also note that it is often the case that migrants, especially the new arrivals, can only afford to live in the poorest parts of our cities, where they are engaged in an inevitable competition for public services with local people who are already deprived and struggling. Resulting tensions can damage community cohesion and should not be ignored but acknowledged as a reflection of genuine problems in dealing with sudden social change. Hence, when formulating migration policy it is always important for the government to take into account the needs of the host communities. We will support the government in any attempts to lead the country in a constructive debate about how migration fits into our interdependent world – the root

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Apostleship of the Sea was established in the Catholic Church in England and Wales to provide for the pastoral and practical care of thousands of vulnerable seafarers who visit British ports each year, 60% of whom are Catholics.

<sup>6</sup> According to the UN there were more than 2.4 million trafficked people worldwide in 2006; see the Bishops’ Conference Statement of 2006 on this issue: [www.catholicchurch.org.uk](http://www.catholicchurch.org.uk) → migration.

<sup>7</sup> The following international laws and norms are part of the legal and ethical framework that enshrines basic human rights: The International Convention on the Protection of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, 2003; The European Convention on Human Rights, 1957; The UN Convention Against Organised Crime and its two Protocols on the Trafficking and Smuggling of Human Beings, 2003; The European Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings, 2004 and the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol.

<sup>8</sup> The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales in ‘The Easter People’ issued in the light of the National Pastoral Congress, 1980

causes of migration, the benefits we accrue from it, the impact of the 'skills-drain' and/or the benefits of earnings sent home by migrants from poor countries and why policies are needed to 'manage' migration in an increasingly globalising world.<sup>9</sup> The government's new points based system of managed migration is welcome; however we have concerns that the system favours the highly skilled migrants from developing countries, while closing the door to the others.

## **2. THE PERSPECTIVE IN BRITAIN**

Britain has a long tradition of welcoming and showing hospitality to migrants. In times of political and social upheaval elsewhere in Europe people again and again sought refuge here - from the political turmoil in France, the famine and poverty in Ireland, the Nazi persecution to the Cold War related conflicts in Eastern Europe. In the years after the Second World War, as decolonisation set in, hundreds of thousands of migrants from former colonies were encouraged to come to Britain to help in the reconstruction of the socio-economic and infrastructural fabric of the country. The construction, car and transport industries were particular beneficiaries of this migration, as were the health and other social services of the country.

The concern of the Catholic Church regarding the reception and treatment of migrants, and on the related question of community relations, dates as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From Cardinal Henry Manning (1865 – 1892) to Cardinal Basil Hume (1976 – 1999), the leaders of the Catholic Church have always spoken out in defence of migrants and founded Church based structures for their pastoral care. In 1968, Cardinal John Heenan joined Dr Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in condemning the *1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act* aimed at preventing the entry of Asians expelled from Kenya; the *Act* was also meant to exclude migrants from other Asian and Black Commonwealth countries. In 1984, The Bishops' Conference set up the Catholic Association for Racial Justice to empower and support Black and ethnic minority Catholics who migrated from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. In 1988, the Bishops' Conference published a document, '*Towards a Statement on the Rights of Migrants and Settlers*' underlining the teachings of the Catholic Church on migration in the context of British immigration laws. The Statement recognised that the government had a right and a responsibility to regulate its borders, but basic dignity and human rights cannot be denied to any persons coming to these islands to work (or seek asylum) on the grounds that they are not, or not yet, fully accepted as citizens. Ever since, the pastoral care and concerns for the rights and welfare of migrants has been firmly rooted in the Catholic Church, more recently, for example, in the annual Mass celebrated in London on the Feast of St Joseph the Worker.

In 1976, Walter Bühlmann predicted that by the year 2000 the centre of gravity of the Catholic Church would have changed from the north to the south and from the west to the east.<sup>10</sup> His prediction was indeed prophetic and the growth of the Church in Africa and Asia over the last thirty years has been phenomenal. When coupled with migration from Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe this now impacts the profile of the Catholic Church throughout the world, Britain being no exception.

In recent times the Catholic Church has been further strengthened with the arrival of migrants from the new Members States of the EU. They have increased both the membership of the local Church

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<sup>9</sup> Earnings sent home by migrants (remittances) according to the World Bank's 2005 calculations, amounted to \$100b annually. When informal remittances were estimated the figure leapt to \$300-\$400b, more than that year's global aid amount of \$68.5b.

<sup>10</sup> 'The Coming of the Third Church' - Walter Bühlmann, 1976.

and challenged it to new forms of solidarity and communion.<sup>11</sup> Catholic migrants new and old have brought to Britain symbols, practices and devotions that add visible substance to the Church's catholicity. Migrants are a sign of the Church's openness to and inclusiveness of all peoples and cultures. It enables us to have a more complete image of the Catholic Church, of its universality, its historical past, as well as the richness of its traditions and the colourful variety of its rites, giving expression to the ancient psalm: "*Praise the Lord, all you nations, glorify him all you peoples*" (Ps.116, 1).

While most migrants are in Britain with permission, many are "undocumented". Sometimes this is because they have entered the country illegally, but in most cases, it is because they have overstayed their visas or where their asylum claims have failed but they cannot return, because their countries are still in turmoil or refuse to accept their return. Many of these migrants have been here for several years; some have even set down roots and started families. Without condoning illegal immigration, the Church's position on this, as in other fields of human endeavour, does not allow economic, social and political calculations to prevail over the person, but on the contrary, for the dignity of the human person to be put above everything else, and the rest to be conditioned by it. The Church will continue to advocate compassion to allow the 'undocumented' an opportunity to acquire proper status, so that they can continue to contribute to the common good without the constant fear of discovery and removal. Equally, it is important to monitor the treatment of migrants to ensure that they are not exposed to dangerous forms of callousness and exploitation by unlicensed gangmasters, as exemplified by the tragedy at Morecambe Bay in 2004 when 21 Chinese migrant cockle pickers drowned. Since this tragedy the Government has adopted the *2004 Gangmasters (Licensing) Act* to protect migrants from exploitative and criminal activities. We welcome and support the enforcement of this law.

In making this call, the Church upholds the sacredness of life, the value of family life and the dignity of labour - principles that are central to Catholic Social Teaching.<sup>12</sup> In all these situations the Church is called to be present, not only with her humanitarian assistance, but also with what is more specific to being Church: her pastoral, spiritual and evangelising mission. This is the challenge that the pilgrim Church, at the service of all humanity ought to take up and meet in the Gospel spirit of universal charity. "*For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jew or Greek, slaves or free persons, and we are all given to drink of one spirit*" (1 Cor 12:13).

In the past, the pastoral mission of the Catholic Church assigned responsibility for migrants to the Church of origin. In 1969, Pope Paul VI in his the Apostolic Letter *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura* exhorted the host Church to take responsibility for migrant communities. The particular form of providing pastoral care for migrants, including for those of the Eastern Catholic traditions, that we the bishops of England and Wales have found to be useful has been through the appointment of migrant chaplains and episcopal vicars, *missio cum cura animarum* (mission with pastoral care) and where appropriate, the opportunity for personal parishes. A Policy Advisor on Refugees was also appointed to assist with policy analysis and advocacy. We recognise, with gratitude, the various diocesan and parish justice and peace groups, religious orders, lay associations and ecclesial movements, with all the diversity of their charisms, who daily bear Christian witness in the service of migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "*Our Church is Catholic...it is not British or Irish or Black. As migrants settle and find work, it is to be hoped that they move into local parishes, and there find a warm welcome.*" Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> a) Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, no.3 (On Human Work,1981)

b) *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, paragraphs 210-241.

<sup>13</sup> Outstanding among them include: Ethnic Chaplaincies, the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the Columban Fathers, Jesuit Refugee Service, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Sisters of the Sacred Heart, The Servites, Sisters of St Joseph of Annecy, Sisters of St Louis, St John Of God, Diocesan and Parish J&P Groups, Pax Christi, Cafod, St Vincent de Paul, National Board of Catholic Women, the Catholic Women's League and the Catholic

The time has come to create a point of pastoral reference to assist with the initial and ongoing formation of our clergy and pastoral agents so that they are properly instructed and equipped to minister in a multi-cultural environment. Extra efforts must also be made to form partnerships with Episcopal Conferences and international religious orders of the country of origin, in order to educate migrants, especially on the dangers of spontaneous migration and to seek assistance with pastoral programmes for migrants already here in Britain.<sup>14</sup>

### **3. THE BIBLICAL MANDATE AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING**

The Church's mission to migrants is rooted first and foremost in God's love for humanity and for 'people on the move'. Again and again the scripture writers in the Bible describe God's presence with and God's call to migrants. In the Book of Genesis, Abraham and Sarah are called to leave the land of Ur and go to the Promised Land of Canaan (*Gn.12:1-3*). In the Book of Leviticus the Israelites' own experience of leaving Egypt and wandering in the desert gives rise to God's command to take special care of the alien. "*You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you: have the same love for him as for yourself: for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt*" (*Lev.19:33-34*).

At the very beginning of the Gospel of Matthew, Mary and Joseph are uprooted three times from their community: first they travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the census, then they flee to Egypt because Herod wants to kill their newborn son, Jesus, and finally they return when the danger is past. It is good to remember that strangers were the first to come to worship the child Jesus and that Mary and Joseph were actually refugees (*Mt.2:7-16*).

For Christians, Jesus is the embodiment of God's love – His life, His ministry (of healing, preaching, teaching, reconciling and caring for and reaching out to the poor, the excluded, the stranger and the outsider), His Death and His Resurrection. The evangelists give us glimpses of the society in Jesus' time, a society so full of poverty, hunger and homelessness. They echo the description given by the historian Flavius Josephus when he writes about Palestine. Inter alia, the evangelists speak to us of large groups of people continually on the move, usually following someone who can solve their problems, even temporarily, of hunger and homelessness. In his gospel, St Mark says that Jesus '*felt sorry for them because they were more like sheep without a shepherd*' (*Mk.6:34*). Throughout his ministry, Jesus is portrayed both as a migrant and as someone who welcomes strangers. He himself says that '*He has nowhere to lay His head*' (*Mt. 8:20; Lk.9:50*). On the other hand he regularly goes out of his way to reach out, to welcome, to include and to heal the strangers of his time and culture – Samaritans, the Syro-phoenician woman.

We know from the book of Acts about the mutual help the first Christians in Jerusalem gave each other, when after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in AD70, they had to seek refuge in their own communities and find ways to meet everyone's needs. Over the centuries Christian communities were ready to show hospitality and sharing with the alien and the stranger, especially during times of persecution.

The Catholic Church in Britain too has known persecution, martyrdom and flight throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries right up to the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the restoration of the Hierarchy in 1850. During all this time the Church has known God's grace as it lifted spirits in times of despair, sustained hope in time of hopelessness and revived love despite the human frailties of its pilgrim peoples.

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Association for Racial Justice, notwithstanding pastoral assistants, catechists in parishes and teachers in Catholic schools who work tirelessly for the Church.

<sup>14</sup> *Ecclesia in Europa* (the Church in Europe, 2003), post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation, No.103

The Social Teaching of the Catholic Church draws on this scriptural tradition as it embraces and promotes the human rights and dignity of migrants. As a response to the injustices of the Industrial Revolution, Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (The Condition of Labour, 1891) spelt out that human beings and their labour have a God-given dignity that calls for respect, solidarity and the common good. The opening lines of Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965) help us to understand the solidarity with migrants that has been part of our history as Church, and why this solidarity must continue to characterise our life as a believing community - "the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts."<sup>15</sup>

Since then Popes, Bishops and the Church's teaching documents have constantly re-emphasised three basic principles that encapsulate our attitude and responses to migration:

- People have a right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.
- A country has the right to regulate its borders and control migration.
- A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy, and recognise and respect the human dignity and rights of migrants.<sup>16</sup>

What these principles articulate is that a migrant's legal status is quite separate from his or her human dignity, since all of them without exception are endowed with inalienable rights, which can neither be violated nor ignored. For the Catholic Church migration is both a faith issue as well as an ethical issue, but with no political or ideological agenda. As we said in our Statement on the Common Good of 1997, "The Church has the right and the duty to advocate a social order in which the human dignity of all is fostered and to protest when it is in any way threatened".<sup>17</sup> As a Church we are called to welcome Christ in the migrant and welcome the migrant like Christ (*Mt.25: 31-46*). Our mission to migrants therefore forms an integral part of the Church's Mission.

#### **4. MIGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WIDER MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

In the Catholic Church we have a very rich tradition and understanding of mission. From the earliest times as the early disciples moved out from Jerusalem to new lands and cultures, the mission of the Church has consistently included three interdependent elements:

- First, the task of the **Proclamation of the Word**. This is the task of leading people to a deeper relationship with the Risen Lord - the evangelical and catechetical dimension.
- Second, the task of building up and renewing the **Communion and Holiness of the Church**. This is the task of strengthening the liturgical, social and prayer life of the church community - the ecclesial dimension.

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<sup>15</sup> The Church's main teaching documents on migration include: The Apostolic Constitution, *Exsul Familia* (The Émigré Holy Family, 1952), considered the Magna Charter of Catholic teaching on migrants (1952); *Mater et Magistra* (Christianity and Social Progress, 1961); *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World, 1965); *Christus Dominus* (1965 – no. 16 and 18), the Apostolic Letter, *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura* (The Pastoral Care of Migrants, 1969); the Apostolic Letter, *Caritatis* (Sacrament of Charity, 1970); the Apostolic Constitution, *Pastor Bonus* (The Good Shepherd, 1988) and the recent Instruction of the Pontifical Council on Migrants, *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* (Love of Christ Towards Migrants, 2004). In addition references can also be gleaned from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993 - n.2241), and the Code of Canon Law (1998 – c. 476, c. 529 and c. 568).

<sup>16</sup> See also the Holy See's Statement to the 61<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly's 'High Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development' by H.E. Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, Head of Delegation - September 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Bishops' Conference in 'The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching', 1997 (Preface of Cardinal Basil Hume).

- Third, the task of being at the **service of God's Kingdom**. This is the task of reaching out to the poor, the excluded, the vulnerable, promoting the value of 'life', dialoguing with those of other Faiths, sharing the powerful and energising message of the coming Kingdom and helping to build a more peaceful, just and reconciled world – the ethical dimension.

This threefold understanding of mission was given a new impetus at Vatican II, when it affirmed that through baptism, all the faithful share in Jesus' Prophetic, Priestly and Kingly mission (*Lumen Gentium* – Dogmatic Constitution the Church - nos. 10, 12, 13, 34, 35, 36 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem* - Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity - nos. 2, 3, 10).

#### **4.1 Our mission to migrants: a call to proclaim the Word**

*“Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever” (Heb 13:8)*

Pope John Paul II in his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (The Mission of the Redeemer) writes, ‘I sense that the moment has come to commit all the Church’s energies to a new evangelisation and the mission ad gentes (mission to nations).’ This sense of a new evangelisation is repeated in the late Pope’s letter *Ecclesia in Europa 2003* (The Church in Europe), which call this “new evangelism” to be centred on the person of Jesus Christ: the encounter with the living Jesus Christ is the path to conversion, communion and fellowship. This personal encounter with the risen Lord so abundantly recounted in the Gospels, leads to a vision of the Lord present and active in the world, especially among the poor, the stranger and the migrant. Migrants inspire Catholics to a conversion of the heart through which they are able to offer a genuine and suitable welcome, to share together as brothers and sisters in God’s household. All of this is an expression of the Spirit of the risen Christ “*who has come to heal the world of sin and division*” being poured out again on his followers.<sup>18</sup>

The Holy Spirit made manifest at Pentecost enabled people of diverse languages and cultures to understand that one message of salvation (*Acts 2:1-4*). Since that day, the Church continues to carry out her mission, proclaiming the ‘marvels’ that God does not cease to accomplish among all peoples of different races, nations and cultures. The Church’s response to the new migration is thus informed by a renewed vision of what it is to be Church, and by a new spirituality, informed by the Spirit of Pentecost present in the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, which gives the power to discern the one message of the Kingdom in the diverse cultures and languages of our migrant brothers and sisters. The new evangelisation means openness to the gifts of Spirit, wherever they might appear.

The Church in the new millennium will be, as it has always been, a Church of many cultures, languages and traditions, yet at the same time one, as God is one – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Rublev’s Icon of the Holy Trinity identify the divine communion between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit with the communion of the three strangers who were received and fed by Abraham in the spirit of genuine hospitality (*Gen.18*). Migrant communities give witness to what it is to be Church – in their desire to worship as a people, in their faith, in their solidarity with one another, in their devotion and their faithfulness to the Church of their ancestors.

Migrants are also a reminder of the pilgrim state of the Church, made up of all those, regardless of race or national origins, who have been called to the banquet and have responded (*Lk. 14:23*). As a pilgrim, the Church encompasses in itself all the reality of human suffering and all the glory of the human spirit infused with the grace of Christ.

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<sup>18</sup> Liturgy of the Eucharist, Penitential Rite.

In past centuries Christianity spread because Christians, travelling to or settling in regions where Christ had not yet been proclaimed, bore courageous witness to their faith and founded Christian communities and even countries - *missio ad gentes* (mission to nations). In this sense migration has always served as a means for transmitting the faith throughout the history of the Church and in the evangelising mission - *missio ad migrantes* (mission to migrants).

Today this migratory trend has reversed somewhat dramatically. Migrants of other Faiths are increasingly going to countries with a Christian tradition. Nevertheless, the Church, like the Good Samaritan, considers it her duty to accompany all migrants, including those from non-Christian backgrounds. We affirm the call of Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Letter, *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (At the Beginning of the Third Millennium, no.55, 56) for enhanced inter-religious dialogue. It is the duty “to bear clear witness to the hope that is within us. Dialogue must not hide but exalt the gift of faith”.<sup>19</sup>

The Church is therefore challenged to be an evangelising Church open to inter-faith dialogue, take the option for the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised, giving witness and proclaiming the Gospel to all those willing to hear it (*1 Pt. 3,15*).

#### **4.2 Our mission to migrants: a ministry of welcome and call to build the communion and the Holiness of the Church.**

*“There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them”(1 Cor. 12:4-6).*

The Dicastery Instruction ‘*Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*’ (The Love of Christ towards Migrants, 2004) stressed both the importance of a ministry of welcome and its underlying purpose as building that of communion. The ministry of welcome is both an expression of communion and a call to migrants to become full members of the local Church. Communion should also be understood as a process – a journey that involves enabling migrants and migrant communities, to connect with, belong to, and make every effort to participate in the various pastoral programmes and initiatives of the local church.

The Church will also stand by migrants in their efforts to integrate into society at large on the basis of a positive recognition of their diversities. In practical terms this would mean assisting migrants overcome inequalities (economic, social, security of residence and family life) and acquire competences (language, new skills and democratic practices) so that they too can enjoy the benefits of citizenship and contribute to society.

For migrants especially from a ‘collective’ culture, community is very important. When someone leaves their country they are leaving their family, their extended family and very often a close knit community. It is not surprising then that migrants gravitate around their own community where they find support, friendship and a sense of cultural identity. This can sometimes be misunderstood by the host community or even in the parish. The communion the Church seeks to create however includes and transcends all particular cultural communities. For the local parish or diocese the call to build communion is a call to nurture a community of faith, of fellowship and of prayer and worship.

**Nurturing a community of faith:** Many of the new migrants in Britain, particularly those arriving from Eastern Europe, are Catholic. Naturally they turn to the Church to sustain and celebrate their

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<sup>19</sup> The importance of inter-religious dialogue was later re-emphasised in the Dicastery Instruction *Erga migrantes caritas Christ* (Love of Christ towards Migrants, 2004, no. 5).

faith and for day-to-day practical support as they face the daily pressures of living in accord with their Catholic faith in a different culture. For a migrant family or community, the Church is very important, as it is a familiar place in a strange world as well as a place where people can find meaning, strength and hope during a period of great transition or even struggle. Enabling migrants to meet, to share, to pray in their own language and their own way is very important. If the need arises assigning a link person who can speak their language can really help the new migrant community understand British society and integrate with the parish in a practical way.

Another key element in facilitating integration is leadership. As leaders emerge in a migrant community, it is important to discern, encourage and support them to take on leadership roles in the parish. The importance of leaders and link persons is that they develop strong links between the migrant community and the wider parish community and thereby avoid the development of 'separate' and isolated communities.

If the numbers of non-English speaking migrants is significant, the question of catechesis and preparation for the sacraments can be problematic. In any case it is important to develop integrated catechetical programmes where all children are included but where the different needs are also met. Older migrants or people with the relevant language skills are an invaluable resource to assist with catechetical programmes.

**Nurturing a community of fellowship:** There is a difference between 'friendship' and 'fellowship'. In a normal parish whether large or small, one would not expect to be a close friend of everyone in the parish. However, most parishioners can share in the general sense of fellowship and unity in the parish by celebrating special occasions and feasts, by supporting special projects and by participating in special activities or liturgies. These communal occasions, especially when migrant communities are given the opportunity to take the lead, go a long way towards healing misunderstandings, reconciling differences and promoting fellowship and unity in our Church.

**Nurturing a community of worship and prayer:** The area that often causes a lot of anxiety is that of liturgy and prayer. It is good to recognise however, that cultures differ in the way values and feelings are expressed. One culture may use music more than another; others will use dancing, poetry or story telling. Likewise, styles and patterns of prayer may differ – not essentially – but in the expression of thoughts and feelings. Dancing, for example, is an essential part of prayer and praise in Africa. In Asia there is a deep awareness of the sacred place or space, so altars, shrines and statues become an important focus for prayer. In Orthodox traditions icons have a special place in Christian spirituality. In Spain, Portugal and South America, processions are a very important part of communal prayer and popular faith. Add to this the fact that the deeper the sentiment the more difficult it is to express it in another language, we see how creating a community of prayer poses huge challenges. Unity however, does not mean uniformity that is everyone doing the same thing and praying the same way. All of us can learn from different forms and expressions of prayer in the Church. The opportunity to incorporate music and other elements from diverse cultures into the parish liturgy should be done with care and attention to all concerned. At its best, it will be a sign to the migrants of their integration into the parish and the community, whilst providing new ways to celebrate the mysteries in our liturgy.

Our challenge is to be respectful of diversity, ensure that it contributes to unity but always be mindful that it is the Holy Spirit that gives both unity and diversity. Nowhere is this truer than in the celebration of the Eucharist. It is important, therefore, to respect the traditions of prayer of migrant communities and their desire to pray in their mother tongue but it is also important to help people pray especially the Mass in English, perhaps by providing appropriate prayer leaflets. It might also be helpful to have criteria to discern when it is appropriate to have regular celebrations of the Eucharist in another language. In parishes where there are regular celebrations of the Eucharist in

different languages it will be important to create opportunities for multi-cultural and multi-lingual celebrations (e.g. international days like World Migration Day or the UN Day for Peace; the parish feast day or other national patron saints day) when different communities celebrate together.<sup>20</sup>

#### **4.3 Our mission to migrants: a call to a ministry of service**

*“I was a stranger and you made me welcome” (Matt. 25:34-46)*

For a migrant community, however, this initial need for pastoral support and welcome quickly gives way to the need for practical help, information and advice. Migrants will experience the Church’s welcome most personally in the parish and the school. A good education is long recognised as an important step on the journey towards human development and integration into society and Catholic schools therefore have a crucial role to play in that process.

It is important to remember that welcoming migrants means much more than saying ‘hello’. It means reaching out across the boundaries of language and culture and connecting with people. It means going to the places where people meet, when they meet, and if necessary helping them get a place to meet. It means walking with and listening to people – to their stories and their struggles, to their hopes and aspirations, to their worries and anxieties. It means trying to understand their sense of loss and loneliness, their sense of isolation and marginalisation, their culture, their community and their sense of achievement.

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<sup>20</sup> As instructed in *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*, (The Pastoral care of Migrants art.24. sec.2), the World Day of Migrants has particular significance for migrants in the Catholic Church and it should be celebrated in all dioceses. The Message of the Holy Father released on such an occasion should be given proper publicity. In England and Wales, World Day of Migrants is celebrated on 3<sup>rd</sup> December of every year.

#### **4.4 Recommendations for pastoral action**

Mindful of the different context and pastoral needs of migrants, in various parts of England and Wales, and mindful also of the good work being done by many dedicated people, we make the following suggestions:

- the provision of Catholic Church based welcome and information leaflets on the location of Churches and mass times and the location of Catholic schools and admission policies. diocesan and parish websites could be utilised for this purpose.
- the inclusion of migrant chaplaincies by fostering co-operation and collaboration with them to provide pastoral care and support to migrants, particularly when the parish does not have the resources.
- the empowering of migrant communities to become active participants in the life of the parish by encouraging them to contribute to parish liturgies, take on roles of service (e.g. readers, minister of communion, membership of Parish Pastoral Councils, altar servers); making available parish resources where migrants can meet to share concerns or for their own distinctive events; develop programmes that would bring the migrant and host communities together (e.g. Observe the annual World Migration Day, celebrated here 3<sup>rd</sup> December, though the date can be changed to accommodate parish needs.)
- the organisation of migration awareness and sensitisation programmes in parishes, Catholic schools, institutes of higher learning and seminaries. It is appropriate that seminarians and pastoral workers are offered courses on the social and pastoral issues connected with the presence of migrants, as part of their formation.
- the provision of induction courses (pastoral and cultural adaptation) for overseas clergy and religious applying to work in Britain, such as that established by Ushaw and Womersley seminaries.
- the provision of general information to facilitate early integration into the civic realm. For example, on how to access health care, job-centres, local council offices etc. The provision of English Language classes is a key issue as it affects so many other factors such as employment prospects and accessing legal and social networks.
- befriending schemes and the accompanying of migrants by clergy, religious and lay people to advocate as interpreters in dealings with statutory and non-statutory authorities.
- engaging in Christian advocacy to defend the moral and ethical principles that underpin the migration phenomenon, and campaigns for the upholding of international laws and standards on migration with due regard to the just interests of the host communities.
- a recognition that to achieve effective services and advocacy for migrants, there is a need to work with the government, local authorities and trade unions, as well as ecumenically with other Christian denominations, people of other faiths and the Non-Governmental Organisations.

These recommendations, indicative rather than exhaustive, when sustained with sacramental and liturgical celebrations, devotional activities, catechesis and missionary outreach will not only help migrants feel a sense of belonging and welcome but also help the Church establish its proper presence among migrants.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

We firmly believe that our Church can realise a part of its prophetic mission in the world, by fundamentally committing ourselves to welcoming the stranger - the migrant, the refugee, the victim of human trafficking - and to the promotion of justice, peace and reconciliation. We feel that the current international context, especially as globalisation gathers pace, challenges our Church to mobilise itself in proclaiming the Gospel of hope and love for all people and remembering the communion in Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection that give us a sense of direction and meaning in our relationship with each other. This is the core of Pope Benedict XVI's first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est* (God Is Love, 2005). As Disciples of Christ we are blessed with the gift of knowing God's love, as missionaries for Christ we are charged with the task of being instruments and witness to that love. We will stand in solidarity with our migrants brothers and sisters and all those in our Church assisting them and we will continue to advocate just and fair, managed migration policies.

*A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through compassion is a cruel and inhuman society. Yet society cannot accept its suffering members and support them in their trials unless individuals are capable of doing so themselves; moreover, the individual cannot accept another's suffering unless he personally is able to find meaning in suffering, a path of purification and growth in maturity, a journey of hope.* Pope Benedict XVI's second encyclical, *Spe Salvi* (On Christian Hope, 2007).

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