



‘Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt ... for Herod is about to search for the child and destroy him.’

Matthew 2:13

Resource Guide for Refugee Week

15 - 21 June 2026



**Refugee
Week**

 **Caritas**

Portsmouth Diocese



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For more information or to discuss how you might support migrants and refugees in your parish contact us at caritas@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk

Introduction

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates there are 117 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, with increasing numbers of people being displaced due to persecution, conflict, and violence, amongst other issues. Of that 117 million, 42.5 million are classed as refugees, and 8.42 million are people seeking asylum. 66% of refugees are hosted in the country neighbouring their own, with the hope of being able to return.

In the March of 2026 there were a total of 13,230 people seeking safety in the Diocese, an average of 0.34% of the population. 2857 are seeking asylum predominantly in Portsmouth, Reading, Bournemouth, Windsor and Maidenhead and Southampton.

In his messages, Pope Francis has stressed that it is important to move beyond the statistics, and realise that migrants and refugees *'are no different than our own family members and friends.'*

'Each of them has a name, a face, and a story,... as well as an inalienable right to live in peace and to aspire to a better future for their sons and daughters.'



This guide has links to resources and ideas to support those seeking sanctuary within our communities.

Prayer and Reflection



Stations of the Cross resource from JRS

<https://www.jrsuk.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Stations-of-the-Cross-Lent-2024-WEB-version.pdf>

This can also be accessed to listen to at <https://prayasyougo.org/series/way-of-the-cross-journey-with-jesus-and-refugees-27>

Love the Stranger produced by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales, places the human being at the heart of our pastoral outreach, looking beyond statistics and policies to the person – each with a name, a face and a story. The document offers 24 guiding principles to help us respond and welcome refugees and people seeking sanctuary. <https://www.cbcew.org.uk/love-the-stranger/>.

Caritas Southwark and JRS have put together a parish study resource <https://caritas.rcaos.org.uk/resources/>

Reflect on the statement released by the Bishops of Portsmouth, Rt Rev Philip Egan and Rt Rev Jonathan Frost. <https://portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/two-bishops-of-portsmouth-issue-statement-about-asylum/>

Migrants, missionaries of hope. Pope Leo XIV has released a message for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees. Read the full message at <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/migration/documents/20250725-world-migrants-day-2025.html>

CAFOD have a number of prayers for those seeking safety <https://cafod.org.uk/pray/prayer-resources/refugee-prayers>



Lampedusa Cross

Prayer and Reflection



Prayer intentions

“Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43). The Lord entrusts to the Church’s motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience – from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will, who are called to respond to the many challenges of contemporary migration with generosity, promptness... I wish to reaffirm that our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.”

Pope Francis, World Day of Migrants & Refugees 2018.

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35) For all migrants and refugees around the world, that they may find safety, welcome, and dignity in their journey, and that we may open our hearts and communities to receive them with love.

“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble” (Ps 9:9) For all people forced to flee their homes due to war and persecution, that they may find safety, and find hope through the compassion of others.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ” (Ga 6:2) For all people working to give a warm welcome to refugees, in thanksgiving for their effort and generosity. We pray for all who accompany, serve, and advocate for refugees.

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (Hebrews 13:2) For our parish community, that we may be moved by the Gospel call to welcome the stranger and act in solidarity with those on the margins.

“Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression” (Is 1:17) For political leaders and decision-makers: that they may uphold the dignity and rights of migrants and refugees, and work for peace and justice in our world.

Prayers from the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)_Jubilee parish Pack <https://www.jrsuk.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/JRS-UK-Jubilee-Parish-Pack.pdf>

Liturgy and Scripture



“Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt” Deuteronomy 10:19

Template Prayer Service produced by JRS <https://www.jrsuk.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Prayer-Service-for-Refugees.pdf>

The Liturgy Office has scriptures in difference languages at <https://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Preparation/Migrants.shtml>

The God Who Speaks Social Action in Scripture resource <https://www.godwhospeaks.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Social-Action-Toolkit.pdf>

Scripture references:

Leviticus 19:33-34

Hebrews 13:2

Matthew 2:13-15

Galatians 3:28



“At this place and time in history, there is great need for men and women who hear the cry of the poor and respond with mercy and generosity.” Pope Francis

Parish Actions



- Find local support group that are already working with refugees or people seeking asylum in the area and see what their needs are.
- People newly arrived in the UK are often isolated both culturally and through lack of English. Can your parish support by offering English practice sessions or cross culture groups that help them learn more about English way of life as well as sharing elements of their own cultures?
- People seeking asylum are not allowed to work and can struggle to find volunteering opportunities. Time moves slowly with nothing to do. Can you host a social group, such as an craft session for women, or provide cooking opportunities for people in hotels?
- Pray for those who are having to flee their homes for their own and families safety. that they might find a place of refuge and the opportunity to build a new life, find work and participate in society.
- Take part or organise one of the Refugee Week simple acts, everyday actions that are a way to stand with refugees and make new connections in our communities. Find out more at <https://refugeeweek.org/simple-acts/>.
- Refugee Tales is coming to Portsmouth. Every summer, 120 walkers per day join Refugee Tales to walk in solidarity with people who have experienced immigration detention. This summer they are walking from Angmering to Portsmouth. Why not join them for part of the journey. Find out more at <https://www.refugeetales.org/refugeetales-2026>.
- Support a family settle in your parish through the Community Sponsorship Scheme. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-full-community-sponsorship/communitysponsorship-guidance-for-prospective-sponsors>



Campaign



This year, the Jesuit Refugee Service UK has come together with the Caritas Social Action Network and the Saint Vincent de Paul Society to launch our new campaign: **Welcome the Stranger: defend the right to asylum**

As Christians, we are called to love refugees and people seeking asylum as our neighbours, and to welcome, protect, promote and integrate them. Yet increasingly, refugees are under attack. Anti-refugee laws mean they face more and more difficulty getting the protection they badly need, while being subjected to huge hostility and cut off from our communities. As Christians, we are saying this needs to change, now.

We have 3 simple asks inspired by our faith:

1. **Restore the right to asylum**
2. **Put dignity and protection at the heart of the asylum system**
3. **End immigration detention**

Everyone deserves the chance to seek safety. This should not be a crime. Let's repeal the anti-refugee laws, create safe routes for people seeking sanctuary, and build a system that examines all asylum claims fairly on their merits.

Join the campaign to defend asylum!

Do you have 5 minutes to spare?

Send a postcard to the Prime Minister asking him to restore the right to asylum, end immigration detention, and put dignity and protection at the heart of the asylum system. Put up a poster to show your support for refugees in your church, school, or workplace.

Or do you have an extra hour?

Share our campaign guide with your church, your friends and your family. Explain why it matters to help refugees and asylum seekers, and get to know the human stories behind the numbers.

Visit <https://www.jrsuk.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Campaign-resource.pdf> for more information on the campaign and other actions you can do to support.



Case Study - St Peter's Welcome Hub

by Lesley Sheldon-Browning

St Peter's Sanctuary Welcome Hub opened its doors on May 4th 2022 in response to the Ukrainian crisis. Seven months later the hub extended its welcome to circa 50 men housed locally who were seeking sanctuary through asylum. Now the hub regularly greets people seeking sanctuary through resettlement routes or asylum -essentially anyone seeking or who has sought sanctuary from another country.

The hub was set up by a small but committed group of volunteers, but very soon the numbers of volunteers spiralled, and today we have 33 regular volunteers with frequent new enquiries. Volunteers, in addition to supporting guests at the hub, also plan and organise activities outside hub hours such as an equine support programme, visits to market gardens and also suggesting volunteer opportunities for guests. A fortnightly briefing is sent to all volunteers and guests detailing news that is of interest to people seeking sanctuary, including education courses, activities etc.

The role of the hub is about creating a safe and friendly place for anyone who is seeking sanctuary. We offer

- 1:1 English teaching (one of the few places where people can learn English with their child or small infant in tow).
- Conversation sessions for people who want to practice conversational English
- Signposting to other organisations
- 1:1 befriending opportunities for those guests who need that extra bit of support.

Case Study - St Peter's Welcome Hub continued

A number of volunteers are members of Southampton and Winchester Visitors Group (SWVG) who support people seeking asylum and thus the hub also operates as “SWVG in Winchester”. We provide tailored support, information and advice to people seeking asylum and new refugees within the boundaries of the Immigration Advice Authority.

In summary, the hub is a thriving but calm environment where we provide compassionate ears, identify immediate needs and connect people with the right services. We also help to build an atmosphere of safety, dignity and inclusion. At the moment guests come from: Bangladesh, Nepal, Ukraine, Nigeria, Peru, Afghanistan, Uganda, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka and Eritrea.

The hub would not have been possible without the support of many volunteers from the parish. These volunteers have made many new friends from both the parish and the sanctuary community. Training has been provided to volunteers on topics such as “working in a trauma informed way”; communication and listening skills; how to befriend etc.

Even in these troubled times people are inspired to act and the words of Mother Teresa come to mind *“The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service and the fruit of service is peace”*

Mother Teresa cited by World Vision 2013

