

PPC Discussion Document 6¹

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Step 1: Examine the present reality in our parish

- How do we foster a culture of welcome?
- How do we challenge racism?
- How do we create awareness of our responsibility towards migrants?

Step 2: Take time to reflect

Migration today, involving some two hundred million people worldwide, constitutes probably the greatest ever population movement in human history. Making up a significant part of this population are those fleeing persecution in search of a place of safety, as well as those searching for work to support themselves and their families.

Encompassing as it does millions of people from diverse backgrounds with a wide spectrum of hopes and aspirations, migration today presents new challenges at many levels. Now part of the reality of contemporary society, migration flows have an influence on all aspects of life - economic, social, political, cultural and religious.

The main inflows to the Republic of Ireland were of people seeking asylum. Quite quickly, however, their number was far exceeded by new arrivals from both within and without the EU who came in response to growing employment opportunities.

At the heart of the Bible is the welcome of God for all of humankind. God created humankind in God's image and likeness (Gen 1.27) and invited all men and women to be part of God's people. This desire of God received a new expression in the coming on earth of Jesus as a human being: 'God loved the world so much that God sent God's only Son.' Coming among us as one like us, Jesus, the eldest of many brothers, shows His followers how they are to be sisters and brothers to one another.

Today, given the unprecedented movements of people, the challenge to the

¹ This discussion document has been developed by The Pastoral Renewal Team of the Kerry Diocese and is shared with the Parish Pastoral Councils of the Elphin Diocese with permission.

Churches is to welcome wholeheartedly, with openness and genuine hospitality and without distinction, those women, men and children from a wide variety of backgrounds who come to live among us. Fostering this culture of welcome, so that it becomes an integral part of the life of individuals, families and communities, is a responsibility not only of the leaders of the Christian community but of each and every member.

To welcome newcomers is an essential dimension of the mission of the Christian community. Important as it is, welcoming others is, however, only a first step. Implied in the initial welcome is a series of practical ongoing consequences if hospitality is to be genuine. The issues which Churches need to consider include:

- How are newcomers and the established community given an opportunity to introduce themselves to one another?
- How are liturgies reflective of the languages, cultures and religious sensitivities of the entire community?
- Are notices and announcements, oral and written, communicated in ways that are comprehensible to all?²

Step 3: Explore various options

Having looked at the reality of how we welcome other cultures in our parish and taken time to reflect on the excerpt from the Irish Council of Churches, explore the various possibilities of how our parish could enhance its welcome of other cultures.

Step 4: identify specific actions

- Informed by the discussion and reflection, identify specific actions that we could carry out in order to enable greater welcome of other cultures and nationalities;
- If no action has been agreed, identify what further research is needed.

Step 5: When the action is completed take time to review it by exploring:

- Did the action achieve its purpose?
- What was not effective?
- Is there a follow-up action needed?

² Taken from: Irish Council of Churches, *Irish Churches' Affirmations On Migration, Diversity and interculturalism*, 2010.