

FORCED MIGRATION AND THE CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER

Imagine if you had to flee your home, right now, because of armed conflict or a natural disaster. Where would you go? What would you do?

Most of us living in Canada today can only imagine what it would be like to be forced to leave our homes. Yet, many of us have our own histories of migration, our own journeys. Who welcomed us or our ancestors? Who was it who encountered us on our own journey of migration?

When Pope Francis launched the Share the Journey campaign in 2017, he invited us to open our hearts to hope and to spread a culture of encounter. But how do we do this? Where do we start?

Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). In saying this, he invited us to welcome migrants and to share their journey.

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, President of Caritas Internationalis, reminded us that Jesus himself undertook many journeys during his life: "As an unborn child he went from Nazareth to Bethlehem. As a child refugee he went to Egypt. As a preacher he travelled the roads of Galilee. His seemingly final journey was to travel up Calvary carrying the heavy wooden beam of a cross.

But what appears to be the end of Jesus' journey was really a beginning. By leaving the tomb, Christ shatters the boundaries of what we thought we knew. By rising from the dead, Christ invites us to roll away the stones that are blocking our own hearts and imagination and to share the journey with each other – in particular with the most vulnerable people, such as forced migrants."

In our faith, each person has intrinsic worth and dignity and all have a place in our world. Catholic Social Teaching places human dignity at its centre, and reminds us that no one person is above another. Every human person, created in the image and likeness of God, has the inalienable right to a dignified life.

This year, we invite you to share the journey as part of a culture of encounter. As Cardinal Tagle reminds us, "We do not necessarily need to do extraordinary and extravagant things to make a difference in the lives of people. Small gestures, ordinary gestures, when done with sincerity, with the light of human understanding and compassion, can do extraordinary things." Take time to truly encounter migrants and refugees and through this experience you will also encounter Jesus.

**"We are all migrants in this world,
we are all just passing through."**

– Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle,
President of Caritas Internationalis