

WORLD DAY FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES



pastoral care.

The theme chosen by the Holy Father for the 106th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, "Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee," is dedicated to the 50.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world; those who have been forced from their homes due to conflict, violence, climate change and disasters and their need for

We are all familiar from the newspapers and TV with images and information about the migrant situation in Greece, Syria, Lebanon and parts of Africa. We have seen the situation on the island of Lesbos and the fact that 534 people have died so far this year trying to cross the Mediterranean. Our Sisters are involved with helping migrants in Myanmar, the Mexican Border and work with people in detention in London. However, I think a true picture of the reality for migrants is very clear from a reflection of Sister Kathleen O'Riordan. I would like to share this with you.



TO DREAM THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

We, Columban Sisters, have been gifted with the privilege of walking with the migrants/asylum seekers here on the Mexican/U.S. border, listening to their stories and sharing their hopes and fears. They no longer make television or newspaper headlines yet their plight is never far from the surface of political discourse. Pope Francis too helps to promote awareness and the fact that recently he added to the Litany of Our Lady the prayer "Mother consolation of Migrants" was very significant. He asks us "not to let fears and prejudices keep us distant from others" but to look into their eyes and feel their pain.

The Trump administration has effectively closed all doors and the U.S. Supreme Court denies asylum seekers the Right to Appeal deportation rulings. These decisions can be a matter of life and death for many people. The so called "Remain in Mexico" policy keeps would-be asylum seekers waiting for months until their case is adjudicated and now that the Courts are closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic they don't even have a possible date for a hearing.

Most are desperate as they cannot return to their home countries - Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador or Brazil due to gang violence, death threats, or extreme poverty, so they are prepared to risk their lives to cross the Border. The plight of so many families is summed up in a very touching poem:



Nobody knows what it's like
To fear for your life
Sleeping on a road going nowhere.

Nobody knows what it's like
To walk through the night
On a road going nowhere.

Nobody knows what it's like
To be denied at a country's border
To walk on a road going nowhere.

Nobody knows what it's like
To leave the only place you've known
And to be on a road going nowhere.

Nobody knows what it's like
To hear the politicians fight
About how to get you off the road going nowhere.



I have been inspired by their stories, what they have suffered during the long hazardous journey and the risks that they have taken to forge a safer life. When I asked one young woman with two small children where they spent Christmas day she told me of their four-day trek through the desert, with no food and carrying the smaller children on their backs. One woman fell and hurt her knee so she couldn't continue walking and thought she was going to die there (as has happened to so many) but "God sent her an angel" and a truck driver found her and brought her here to the Casa del Migrante, a safe refuge.

It was heart breaking to share the story of another woman who left her child at the border in the hope of crossing over to be with the rest of the family when she herself had been deported. The Faith and resilience of these people are truly inspiring as against all odds they risk everything to have a better and safer future for their families. September 27 will be the World day of Migrants and Refugees and the theme this year is " Like Jesus Christ, Forced to Flee". Let us remember too our own people who left Ireland also looking for a better future, and acknowledge their contribution as history repeats itself in our world today. It depends on each one of us to make a difference for others in this life so that God's Kingdom may become a reality.

But right now it's my home
But right now it's my life

But right now I keep going
But right now I try to survive
On the road going nowhere.

Poem by Aoife Ni Riain
Post-Primary winner, Trocaire and Poetry Ireland
Forced to Flee: 'This is our Exodus'



Sister Kathleen Mary O'Riordan
Casa del Migrante, Cd. Juarez, Mexico.