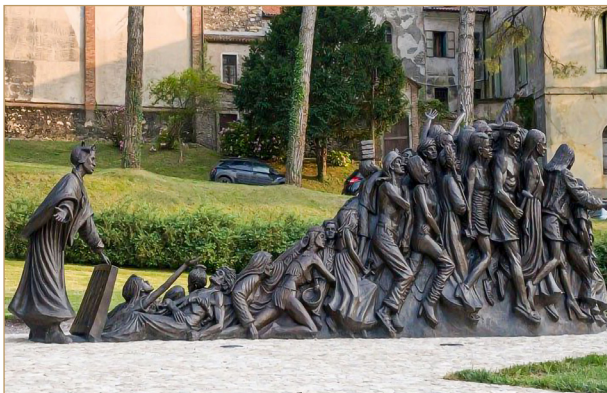


'Asylum seeker'/'International Protection

Applicant is an individual who seeks protection due to a *'well-founded fear'* of persecution on the grounds of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, or they have experienced violence or human rights violations in their home country.

'Refugee' is a person who has received a decision on their international protection application and is recognised as a refugee as defined under the 1951 Geneva Convention. A refugee generally, has similar rights and entitlements as an Irish Citizen.

'Migrant' There is no universally accepted definition and the term is often confused with *'refugee'* in popular narrative. They are not the same. A *'migrant'* would generally move for work, a better education, living conditions or reuniting with family. Often this is not by choice, rather by necessity. For example, millions of Irish people migrated from the 1820s forced by poverty, seeking a better life, improved work opportunities or better pay.



Where can I go to know more?

The Hope and Courage Collective:
www.hopeandcourage.ie

From Every Nation? A Handbook for a
Congregations Journey from Welcome to Belonging
www.irishchurches.org/cmsfiles/From-Every-Nation-.pdf

Irish Refugee Council: www.irishrefugeecouncil.ie

Immigrant Council of Ireland:
www.immigrantcouncil.ie

Crosscare:
www.crosscare.ie/services/migrants-refugees-emigrants/

Migrant Rights Centre Ireland: www.mrci.ie

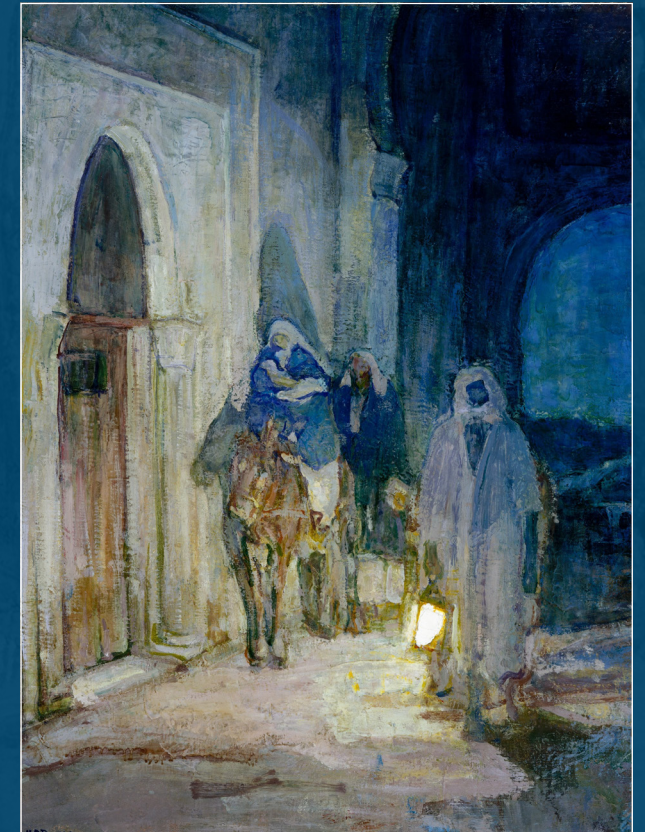
Belonging Without Boundaries is an ecumenical group promoting truth with compassion towards an inclusive and welcoming society throughout the island of Ireland.



Image credits: Flight Into Egypt, Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1923 Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository; Let the Oppressed Go Free sculpture by Timothy Shmatz. Photo Service of the Holy See© and Vatican News; Famine Memorial, Dublin, AMRI; Irish Council of Churches From Every Nation? A Handbook for a Congregations Journey from Welcome to Belonging.

ROOM AT THE INN

A Welcome for the Stranger



"No one is born hating another person because of the colour of [their] skin, or [their] background, or [their] religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

NELSON MANDELA

“Like Jesus Christ, forced to flee.”

POPE LEO XIV

The people of Ireland are no stranger to the migrant experience. St Patrick himself was an immigrant, initially trafficked as a slave. And not to forget that the Holy Family shared in the refugee experience. The New Testament begins with Matthew’s story of Joseph and Mary’s escape to Egypt with the infant Jesus.

Who is ‘the stranger’ among us?

In contemporary times, the stranger is the individual or family who are forced to flee their home due to war and conflict, hunger, climate disaster, poverty, persecution, insecurity, a better life. The terms we assign include: ‘refugee’, ‘asylum seeker’, ‘International Protection Applicant’, ‘economic migrant’, ‘internally displaced’. But these are categories we design, they do not reflect the human being—the children, women and men who are forced to exist, denied their dignity and basic needs.

Increasingly, we are being overwhelmed by myths and misconceptions about these categories and the numbers of people crossing borders. But people are not the problem. It is the root causes that drive and force individuals and families out of their homelands, through dangerous and often fatal journeys seeking safety, protection, a better life.



What’s it got to do with me?

As people of faith, we draw from the core belief that human life is sacred and that we are all made in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis* 1:27). This respect for the integrity of every human life is best displayed in the commandment to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ (*Leviticus* 19:18; *Mark* 12:31). In the oldest texts of the Bible the directive to ‘love our neighbour’ is clearly out-lined (*Leviticus* 19:33–34):

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the stranger as your-self, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

As Christians, but also as a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention and a member of the EU community, Ireland is obligated to protect the rights of the individual. This means that the State must ensure that refugees, International Protection Applicants and migrants are safe, free from torture, not discriminated against or living in poverty.



As Christians, it is our responsibility to love and care for the stranger, a criterion by which we shall be judged: *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me”* (*Matthew* 25:35).

Pope Francis often referred to the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke* 10:29–37) to illustrate who our neighbour is, which is any human being regardless of their ethnic, religious, or socio-economic status. Jesus Himself maintains that we love one another and that when we welcome the stranger, we welcome Him (*Matthew* 25:31–46).

For Ireland to continue to grow and develop, we need to accept and support all forms of migration, which can provide a rich cultural diversity and enhance the wellbeing of our society at many levels, including socially, culturally, economically. The positive contribution of migration to the social and economic progress of the receiving country is widely acknowledged.

As individuals, families and communities, we can look out for the newcomer in our schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods, and make efforts to get to know and welcome those newly arrived. Ireland therefore, has an opportunity to do things differently as it relates to its policy on migration and asylum.

