

Lent 4 - 14 - 20 March 2021. 'Love'

John 3, 14 – 21

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

(verse 16, NRSV)



Parcel distribution by [Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network \(LRMN\)](#), one of the charities supported by our grants in 2020.

When we say God is love, we must not pin on him some definition of our human love and then say He is like that; we must try to find out what love-in-itself is like, and then say that is what our human love is meant to resemble. All too often we think of love in terms of charity, bestowing good on others. It makes us feel better about ourselves and enables us to enjoy the good fortune most of us in our world are able to experience with a clear conscience. It gives us a feeling of satisfaction and the assurance we are doing God's will. But all this is about "me". Christ's love means a deep sharing of ourselves and all that this world offers with those of His creatures who are suffering.

No-one chooses to be a refugee. People flee for their lives from violence, persecution and conflict, acute danger, torture, rape or hunger and thirst. All they are asking is a safe place to live, work and bring up their families. They have been forced to give up all that they once enjoyed – home, family, shared memories and a future. As one man said, summing up the experience of many: "I fled with just the clothes I wore and my Bible and a mobile phone and my life as a refugee had begun. I was exhausted, hungry, afraid and felt very alone. It took me over five years to reach a place of safety, and all I ask is please don't judge us because we are refugees. What happened to us can happen to anyone. We are humans just like you."

While most of us in a free and open society have many options around family, home, careers, community, travel, and choices about how we live our lives and what we do with them, there are those for whom that becomes impossible. They flee to us with a desperate hope in their hearts. Shall we refuse to share with them the world God has given us the privilege to live in?

This is God's world not ours.

Contemplation

Metropolitan Anthony Bloom reminds us *"So often when we say 'I love you' we say it with a huge 'I' and a small 'you'...It's no good just gazing out into open space hoping to see the Lord; instead, we have to look closely at our neighbour, someone whom God has willed into existence, someone whom God has died for. Love is difficult."*

St. John Chrysostom said *"Find the door of your heart, you will discover it is the door of the kingdom of God."*

And Fr. Michel Quoist wrote: *"Lord, why did you tell me to love all men, my brothers? I have tried, but I come back to you, frightened... Like a squall of rain in the face, the cry of men has awakened me; Like a gale of wind a friendship has shaken me, As a ray of light slips in unnoticed, your grace has stirred me..."*

"Don't worry,' God says, 'you have gained all. While men came in to you, I, your Father, I, your God, slipped in among them.'" Read in full [here](#).

This week's material by Gillian Dare, LCRF Trustee.

Photos (right) of refugee children's artwork, and of a food donation box, from LRMN – used with permission and our thanks.

Action for the week

Can you find out about one specific refugee or asylum seeker, his or her name and story? If you are not involved in frontline work, you can find case studies in our '[Resources](#)' section. Try to imagine what it would be like to be in that person's place. How would you feel and how would you cope? Pray for that person if you feel able, and seek a practical way to help them through LCRF or a local charity.

Prayer

O Thou who art love and dwellest in love ! teach us herein to be followers of Thee, as dear children. Never may we shut our hearts against the sorrows of even the unthankful and the lost. Make us organs of thy tender mercy, to soothe the wretched, to lift the abandoned and destitute, to seek and to save the lost; till all shall at length know themselves thy children, and be one with each other and with thee.

Amen (James Martineau, Home Prayers 1892, altd)

