

Refugee Sunday 2009: Worship Resources

“For the needy should not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.” (Ps 9:18)



An elderly man wanders in Mardan, Swat Valley, Pakistan

CWS P/A

Introduction

These resources have been prepared using the lectionary readings for Sunday, June 21, 2009 and can be adapted to suit your priorities.

The focus of World Refugee Day this year is on responding to the needs of people uprooted by war in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In Pakistan over two million have sought refuge as fighting continues between the military and Taleban in the Swat valley, and in Sri Lanka 300,000 Tamils are held in overcrowded, tightly controlled transit camps after fighting ended in the northeast.

Like all refugees and displaced people they depend on others for assistance but also show an amazing resilience. CWS is seeking funds for ACT International partners providing humanitarian assistance in these emergencies through local organisations.

CWS has strong historical links with Refugee Services formerly known as the Refugee and Migrant Service (RMS) who are actively involved in resettling some 750 refugees (the official quota) a year in this country. Another 300 family members are also resettled annually.

World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day is celebrated each year on June 20. It is a day to remember the millions of people who have been uprooted from their homes by war, persecution and violence. Many remain fearful of the future. Often living precariously in refugee camps. The average stay for refugees in camps is now 17 years. Some grow up knowing life only in the camp but with stories of their ancestral homeland and the injustices their families have experienced. Less than 1% are resettled in another country.

The international community while acknowledging the responsibility to protect refugees is finding the task daunting and so far has failed to provide the necessary resources. While refugees have contributed significantly in their new homes most continue to live in fear and uncertainty.

Who is a refugee?

“A refugee is a person who, ‘owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.’”

United Nations Convention on Refugees, 1951

Who is an internally displaced person?

“Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border”

UNHCR

Refugee Facts

In 2007 there were 16 million refugees in the world (of whom 4.6 million are Palestinians) and 26 million internally displaced persons.

There are 200 million international migrants, 3% of the global population.

Sources: UNHCR, UNWRA, World Migration 2008



Food preparation in Mardan, CWS P/A

Gathering Prayer

We have come from afar
 We have come from close by
 We have come by foot
 We have come by car
 We have come with our worries
 We have come with our fears
 We have come to listen to your word and
 We have come to give you thanks and praise.
 Amen

Lectionary Readings

1 Samuel 17: (1a, 4-11, 19-23) 32—49

The archetypical story of David and Goliath pits the small boy from Bethlehem against the strongman. David has sharpened his skills protecting sheep from wild animals and Saul calls for him as an armour bearer (16:21). When Saul's army confronts the Philistines in the disputed border territory, a very confident David, armed with slingshot kills the Philistine (v 49) with one stone according to the story. This story speaks at many levels and demonstrates the power of human tenacity and courage when fuelled by faith and the need to defend one's people.

Ps 9: 11 – 20

This psalm coupled with Psalm 10 celebrates God's defence of those who are afflicted and experience injustice. In these verses the psalmist highlights the suffering with which we can all identify. In v 15 the pit and the net are used to show that the wicked are caught in their own evil schemes but God does not forget the poor and needy (v 18).

2 Cor 6:1 – 13

Corinth in the time of Paul was a key seaport and important gateway for eastern trade under Roman rule. Many of its residents would have been slaves or former slaves and from diverse backgrounds. Most (90%) would have lived on or below subsistence, with no middle class and 3% living in luxury. The letters to the Corinthians suggest the community had diverse opinions and emphasised the experiential aspects of their faith. They do not readily accept Paul's views.

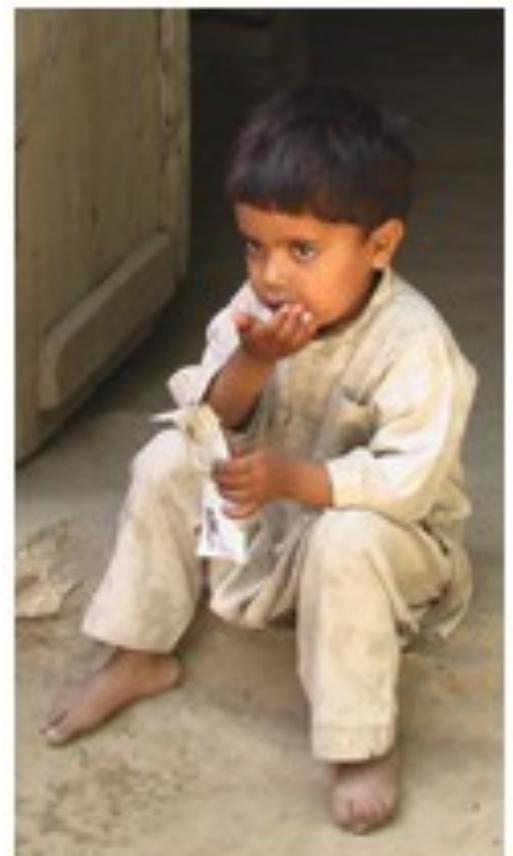
In this text Paul speaks of the resilience of his spirit and faith in spite of the sufferings he has had to endure in his efforts to persuade the Corinthian community. His faith is energising and enables him to deal with internal conflicts, the tribulations of life and the effort of living. Paul transforms these trials into the means of grace. The text lists eight paradoxes of the Christian faith eg honour and dishonour (v8-10). He challenges the Corinthians to open their hearts by declaring his complete commitment to Christ and the gospel. He invites the Corinthians to do the same (v 11-13).

Mark 4: 35-41

Mark presents the familiar story of Jesus confronting the storm. Mostly the fishermen stuck to the shores when fishing, afraid of the violent storms that often hit the Sea of Galilee. For some reason Jesus decided that they should sail across the sea even though night was approaching (v35). Maybe Jesus was testing their faith through a rite of passage? Unable to deal with their fears, the disciples wake the sleeping Jesus (v 38) who immediately rebukes the wind. He admonishes the sea and the wind ceases. The disciples sail on and Jesus disembarks only to be confronted by the Gerasene Demoniac (5:1).

If there is faith, there is no fear. The storm could be likened to the world in which we find ourselves. For many who are refugees this is a violent place without security or the necessities of life. Faith can keep them going through the many uncertainties they face. Perhaps we can learn from them what it means to have faith in such situations.

A young boy in Swabi CWS P/A



Children's Talk

Read part or all of the story of this young Pakistani girl. Children make up more than half of the people displaced by fighting between the Pakistan military and Taliban,

"My name is Kainat. I am ten years old. I used to live in Dir District and was studying in class four at the Government Primary School, Kala Daka.

In May, the fighting started between the Taliban and our Pakistan army. I and my four siblings had to run with our parents. We walked miles and miles on foot and got very exhausted as we had no food for days. It was a never ending journey of three days in day and nighttime. I felt so scared running in the nighttime in the mountains.

"Thanks to Allah, at Malakand, we were able to get a car so all of us came to Mardan, and now, we are living with a host family here. It is so different from my home, as so many of us ran from our homes. Now, we are twenty-six people living in two rooms. It is so congested, and I feel I will faint with no fresh air.

"I am so angry. Taliban opened fire, and they threw a bomb in our neighbors' home. My father panicked, and in the hurry I left my school bag behind with all my books. I did not even complete my homework. Also, I miss my close school friends, Shumaila and Najma.

"After coming to Mardan, I tried to look for them, but still I could not find them. Allah knows what happened, I hope they were able to bring their books with them.

"My mother and other uncles do not let us go out at all. I feel so paralyzed, at night when I try to sleep, I cannot even move as the room is full of people and there is a non-stop load shedding [power cuts], and so many mosquitoes in Mardan. My homeland was not so hot and there were hardly these big mosquitoes. Now, they bite us all night, and I cannot sleep properly.

"Also, I am still searching for my school friends every day. I'm so frustrated that my regular school days are gone. It seems we are living in a strange world now. For every small move we make, all elders are scolding us and taking extra care that we don't go out especially after sunset.

"I never knew Pakistan was such a hot country. My homeland had green mountains, fresh air, and cool water springs. Here our uncle brings water from a nearby water point, and sometimes, when the water runs out, to quench my thirst I have to wait till he returns, and yesterday, I waited two hours for one glass of water.

"This is not my home. I am very worried now. My father, mother, and other elders are always serious, and they don't smile and laugh much so I am thinking something worse will happen to us now.

"Leaving my home and school, I feel very sad, but I want the government and Pakistan army to teach a good lesson to Taliban and the bad people. They should finish them all so we can return home as soon as possible and live our normal lives.

"First thing they (government) should do is to get rid of all bad people from my homeland and also stop this load shedding (electrical power cuts) in Mardan because mosquitoes bite us all night and the heat makes me dizzy.

"I want to go to my *watan* (homeland). My Urdu teacher at Kala Daka, Saulat, taught us that one should always be a good person, study hard to become good citizen, and serve watan. I am worried that my plan will fail if I am not able to go home."

Story from Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan who are providing humanitarian assistance to some of the most vulnerable of the two million people displaced by fighting.

Communal Food Preparation, Mardan, CWS/P/A



Prayer for Uprooted People

Loving God

We pray for the many people around the world who live in the fear created by war and violence
We pray for those who have had to leave their homes and cannot find shelter
We pray for those who are hungry and lack clean water and medical care.

Come suffering God, heal the pain of your people.

Compassionate God

For those people displaced in Pakistan where the temperature is so hot and the fighting so intense, we ask for protection and shelter
For those Tamil people held in Sri Lankan transit camps, we pray for protection and shelter
For all those who have been uprooted from their homes, we pray for protection and shelter.

Come suffering God, heal the pain of your people.

Weeping God

Create in us a deeper sense of your love for this world
Encourage us to be brave in our actions
Generous in our sharing and
Hopeful in our living
That we may build communities of compassion for each other across the many lines that divide and separate us.

Come suffering God, heal the pain of your people.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Prayer of Departure

We go forth in your name
We go by foot
We go by car
We go renewed with your blessing
We go comforted by your word
We go to share your compassion
We go to live in your love and mindful of the needs of the poor

In Jesus' Name

Amen

Suggested Hymns

Be Thou My Vision WOV 455
If thou but suffer God to guide thee WOV 459
Tell My People I Love them AA132
Loving Spirit AA94 (ii)
All will be well AA 2
I heard the voice of Jesus say WOV 500
Who is my mother? AA158
When the storm winds blow AA 152
Safe in the Hands of God AA 117
O God our Help in Ages Past WOV46
Eternal Father, strong to Save WOV74
Where the Road Runs Out WOV672
All my hope in God is founded WOV 465

Assisting the Displaced peoples of Sri Lanka

Nearly 300,000 people are living in overcrowded transit camps with insufficient supplies and medical care after heavy fighting between the Sri Lankan military and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The region is under tight government control, movement is heavily monitored and there is little access for media. Concerned for the humanitarian situation, the New Zealand parliament passed a motion in June expressing its 'deep concern' and asking for 'immediate unhindered access into the internally displaced persons camps' for the United Nations and media.

CWS local partners are responding to the needs of those in the camps by providing food, water and other assistance in the difficult conditions. For more information or appeal fliers see: www.cws.org.nz

Assisting the Displaced people of Pakistan

CWS is assisting local partner Church World Service Pakistan/Afghanistan provide relief assistance to some of the most vulnerable of the two million people displaced in the North West Frontier Province. They are providing shelter, food, water, sanitation and clothing with special attention to the needs of women who are missing out because cultural restrictions mean they are unable to leave their shelter. For more information on the situation see: www.cws.org.nz

Resources



The Churches Agency on International Issues produced *Hot Topics, Immigration Matters*. It includes discussion material for groups as well as information, stories and theological reflection. It can be downloaded at: <http://www.cws.org.nz/resources/international.asp> or requested from CWS at PO Box 22 652, Christchurch 8142.

The United Nations Refugee Agency - UNHCR (for pictures, statistics and stories)
<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

Refugee Services (formerly the Refugee and Migrant Service) <http://www.refugeeservices.org.nz/>

ACT International (stories and information on emergency situations)
http://www.act-intl.org/act_main_title.html

Caritas has produced material on Burmese refugees for this year. Of particular interest is: *Refugee Myth and Realities Fact Sheet*. Downloadable from: <http://www.caritas.org.nz/?sid=1103>