

Pastoral Letter of the Nordic Bishops about the Current Refugee Situation

"..*I was a stranger and you welcomed me...*(Matthew 25:35) - these words of Jesus are more relevant today than ever before. Not since the second World War have so many people fled persecution, war and terror. People from foreign countries, Syria, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia are flooding into our countries to seek shelter, for peace and for a place where they can live in safety. Many of our politicians are trying to find ways to aid these people so that there is an equitable distribution of refugees so that all the countries can help.

We see that, on the one hand, there is a great willingness to help among the people in our countries. Thousands of volunteers are helping the newcomers not only materially, but also with help with the administration, with language instruction and organisation of their free time and helping them to integrate into our society. Many do this because of a deeply rooted Christian faith.

At the same time, it is noticed that racist and xenophobic tendencies in our midst are getting stronger - especially in the social media. Here, as Christians we can face the challenge in a special way by promoting tolerance, and respect for human dignity and love of neighbour, notwithstanding, religion, language or race.

We, the Bishops of the Nordic countries, would therefore like to remind all the faithful to consciously live the Christian values of love for neighbour and mercy and to stand against all forms of racism, hostility towards foreigners and discrimination, not least because many of our parishioners are immigrants or refugees themselves. Thus, we can, today give powerful witness of our faith in the God, who in Jesus Christ became one of us and who said: "*Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.*" (Matthew 25:40)

Bishops of the Nordic Bishops Conference, Magleås, September 5, 2015.

To be read at all Sunday liturgies on September 13, 2015.