

UK/US religious issue united call for west to help our 'brothers and sisters'

The Catholic Sisters of St Joseph of Peace in the UK and US united this week in denouncing divisive political rhetoric and calling for a welcome to be given to immigrants and refugees as sisters and brothers.

Their statement, released to coincide with World Refugee Day, said the western world should "welcome immigrants and refugees," and urged governments to look "to the causes of forced migration such as economic inequality, war, arms sales and excessive use of fossil fuels that are causing seas to rise, forcing island peoples out of their homes."

The statement urges:

- all governments to expeditiously provide safe haven for refugees with all rights guaranteed in the UN Convention and

Protocol on Refugees

- the UK and US governments to allow citizens willing to serve refugees the opportunity to offer hospitality as an expression of their faith

- an immediate end to all rhetoric that instils fear, creates division, or incites violence, regardless of the migrant's faith or nation of origin.

The sisters and their associates are already addressing immigrant and refugee needs by visiting immigrants in detention, providing housing for refugees, teaching English to immigrants and financially supporting a range of immigrant/refugee organisations in the UK and US.

More recently, the Congregation has also been sending members to serve at the Calais refugee camp in France.

Sr Katrina Alton, CSJP, who volunteers with asylum seekers at the Catholic Worker in Glasgow, shared with the media what one destitute asylum seeker from Afghanistan had told her: "The people I meet in Glasgow are kind, but the immigration system here is cruel. In sha'Allah my new friends here will help me get over that." Sr Katrina continued, "We are all one family in the eyes of God."

Responding to the current refugee crisis is one way the congregation lives out its mission to be 'in company with poor and marginalised people' and to 'recommit to Jesus' way of radical hospitality.'

There are currently a record 60 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, more than at any time since the end of World War II.