

Welcoming the Stranger: Immigration and the Church

Leviticus 19:33–34

When a foreigner lives with you in your land, don't take advantage of him. Treat the foreigner the same as a native. Love him like one of your own. Remember that you were once foreigners in Egypt. I am God, your God.

Micah 6:8

But he's already made it plain how to live, what to do, what God is looking for in men and women.

It's quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in your love,
And don't take yourself too seriously—take God seriously.

Hebrews 13:2

Stay on good terms with each other, held together by love. Be ready with a meal or a bed when it's needed. Why, some have extended hospitality to angels without ever knowing it!

Matthew 25:34–40

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Enter, you who are blessed by my Father! Take what's coming to you in this kingdom. It's been ready for you since the world's foundation. And here's why:

I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave

me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then those 'sheep' are going to say, 'Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?' Then the King will say, 'I'm telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.'

Questions for Reflection

What do these passages reveal to us about God's attitude toward the alien and the stranger?

What do these passages tell us our attitudes and actions to the alien and the stranger should be?

What are some common reasons why individuals and nations do not welcome the stranger? In light of the Scriptures, are these reasons satisfactory to you?

How do you as an individual feel called to respond to these Scriptures?

Can you think of three ways your faith community might encourage greater hospitality toward strangers?

A Prayer for Immigrants

Source of Life who is known by many names;

Over-turner and illuminator of hearts;

We gather with gratitude for the earth and all who journey in it.

We are give thanks for the interconnectedness of all creation.

Support for those without support;

Stronghold of those without protection;

We declare openly the times we have fallen short
From living out the call to justice our sacred stories
place upon us;

From hearing the plight of the creation yearning for
justice;

From seeing the harm our way of life and our policies
inflict upon the creation.

Source of Wisdom who is known by many names;

The Prophet Mohammed asks: What actions are most excellent?

To gladden the heart of a human being;

To feed the hungry;

To help the afflicted;

To lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful;

To remove the wrongs of the injured;

Let us not forget.

The Psalmist asks: Who is fit to hold power and worthy to act in God's place?

Those with a passion for the truth, who are horrified by
injustice;

Who act with mercy to the poor and take up the cause
of the helpless;

Who have let go of selfish concerns and see the whole
creation as sacred.

Let us not forget.

Jesus, carpenter of Nazareth, asks: What is the greatest commandment?

To love your creator;

To love your neighbor;

To undermine oppressive powers with life-giving
actions;

To be in solidarity with all who suffer;

To act for justice;

And to teach others to act for justice

Let us not forget.

Source of Justice who is known by many names;

Open our eyes that we may see the immigrant and undocumented;

Not as threats, but as brothers and sisters whose
dignity is tide to our own dignity;

And whose lack of freedom calls into question our own
freedom;

**The farm worker, the hotel maid, the line cook, the
childcare provider, the healthcare worker and so
many others.**

Source of Justice who is known by many names;

Today we stand in solidarity with all those across this
nation living in sanctuary as a result of unjust and
inhumane policies.

Today we say: "Presente," with our sister Elvira
Arellano whose plight for true immigration reform has
galvanized a movement.

Today we claim our place among those who struggle
for justice in the canvas of history.

**Let us not swerve from the path of righteousness that
leads to just and equitable relationship.**

**Give us the courage to stand with those crossing our
borders;**

Living in the shadows;

Risking all to support their families;

Escaping the economic oppression and political
persecution our policies have spurred;

**Give us the strength to confront the prejudice and
intolerance of those who are fearful;**

And respond by closing our borders to those who
sojourn seeking life and opportunity;

**Give us the will to leave behind and open up the
safety of our sanctuaries and temples;**

That our voice, our heart, our spirit will join the voice,
heart and spirit of all who demand to live with respect,
justice and peace;

And that our buildings of worship may be known as a
place of refuge and respite.

**Source of Direction who is known by many names;
In our daily living let us be guided;**

By the highest estimate of the worth and dignity of
every person regardless of their legal status;

And let us not forget;

That the creation is founded on justice;

And that we have the moral responsibility to bring
forth justice into these times.

May it be so.

By Rev. Jessica Vazquez Torres, IWJ

Immigrants in the Jewish, Muslim and Christian Texts

Hebrew Bible

Exodus 23: 9

You must not oppress the stranger; you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19: 32-34

If a stranger lives with you in your land, do not molest him. You must count him as one of your own countrymen and love him as yourself—for you were once strangers yourselves in Egypt. I am Yahweh your God.

Tobit 4: 7-8

Set aside part of your goods for almsgiving. Never turn your face from any poor man and God will never turn his from you.

Psalms 82: 2-4

No more mockery of justice,
no more favoring of the wicked!
Let the weak and the orphan have justice,
be fair to the wretched and destitute;
rescue the weak and needy,
save them from the clutches of the wicked!

Psalms 103: 6

Yahweh, who does what is right, is always on the side of the oppressed.

Proverbs 31: 8-9

Speak, yourself, on behalf of the dumb, on behalf of all the unwanted; speak, yourself, pronounce a just verdict, uphold the rights of the poor, of the needy.

Ecclesiasticus 4: 8-9

To the poor man lend an ear,
and return his greeting courteously.
Save the oppressed from the hand of the oppressor,
and do not be mean-spirited in your judgments.

Isaiah 10: 1-2

Woe to the legislators of infamous laws,
to those who issue tyrannical decrees,
who refuse justice to the unfortunate
and cheat the poor among my people of their rights,
who make widows their prey,
and rob the orphan.

Isaiah 61: 1-2

The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me,
for Yahweh has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,
to bind up hearts that are broken;
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
freedom to those in prison;
to proclaim a year of favour from Yahweh.

Jeremiah 22: 3-4

Yahweh says this: Practice honesty and integrity;
rescue the man who has been wronged from the hands of his oppressor;
do not exploit the stranger,
the orphan, the widow;
do no violence, shed no innocent blood in this place.

Micah 6: 8

What is good has been explained to you;
this is what Yahweh asks of you:
only this, to act justly,
to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7: 8-11

(The word of Yahweh was addressed to Zechariah as follows:) He said: Apply the law fairly, and practice kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the settler and the poor man, and do not secretly plan evil against one another.

Christian Testament

Matthew 25: 35-40

For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me.

. . . I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.

Mark 12: 30-31

This is the first [commandment]...you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

Luke 4: 18-19

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me.
He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

Galatians 3: 28

. . . there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2: 5-8

In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus:
His state was divine,
yet he did not cling
to his equality with God
but emptied himself
to assume the condition of a slave,
and became as men are;
and being as all men are,
he was humbler yet,
even to accepting death,
death on a cross.

Colossians 3: 12-13

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you,

and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience.

1 John 4: 19-21

Anyone who says, 'I love God,'
and hates his brother,
is a liar,
since a man who does not love the brother
that he can see
cannot love God, whom he has never seen.
So this is the commandment that he has given us,
that anyone who loves God must also love his brother.

The Qur'an

The verse numbers given in the references below sometimes vary slightly in different editions and translations of the Quran. However, they are rarely off by more than five verses in either direction.

Verse 107

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful Hast thou observed him who belieth (makes a lie of) religion? This is he who repelleth the orphan, And urgeth not the feeding of the needy. Ah, woe unto worshippers Who are heedless of their prayer; Who would be seen (at worship) Yet refuse small kindnesses.

Verse 4:97

Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves (by sinning), (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels) will say: Was not God's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein?

Verse 55:9

But those who entered the city and the faith before them love those who flee unto them for refuge, and find in their breasts no need for that which has been given to them, but prefer (the refugees) above themselves though poverty become their lot. And who is saved from his own avarice—such are they who are successful.

Verse 16:41

And those who became (refugees) for the cause of God after they had been oppressed. We verily shall give them goodly lodging in the world, and surely the reward of the hereafter is greater, if they but knew.

Verse 24:22

And let not those who possess dignity and ease among you swear not to give to the near of kin and to the needy, and to refugees for the cause of God. Let them forgive and show indulgence. Yearn ye not that God forgive you? God is Forgiving, Merciful.

Verse 4:135

Be ye staunch in justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against (the worldly interests) of yourselves or (your) parents or (your) kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man.

Verse 5:8

Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to God. Lo! God is Informed of what ye do.