

“There are too many of them. How can we possibly cope?”

- The impression that the numbers of arrivals of refugees are impossible to cope with seems to be widespread. There are reasons, sometimes justified reasons, to think that way:
 - In Greece and elsewhere, there are overwhelming numbers of asylum seekers waiting to apply for refugee status. Where borders have closed, countries like Bosnia are really struggling to cope with refugees who are unable to move on.
 - The media coverage of migration routes is often dramatic and – for good reasons – focuses on drownings, criminal networks, violence breaking out etc.
 - When politicians choose words like *aliens*, *invasion*, *tsunami*, or *threat to national security* or describe migration as a battle between Islam and Christianity, no wonder many feel threatened.
 - Migrants often travel in groups for various reasons. They often seek to enter countries through the same points. They often seek asylum in the same nations and are often grouped in the same welcome centres. This concentration is certainly a burden for the authorities in some places as well as local budgets.
- However:
 - The dramatic scenes on TV of men, women and children clinging to little boats are the result primarily of political choices. First, the war, insecurity and failed states at home. But second, Europe’s migration (or rather, *anti-migration*) policies. In other words, if thousands of people take the boat, it is because they are denied the possibility of getting a visa and then to board a plane or conventional ferry service.
 - According to the UNHCR, there are more than 70 million refugees in the world. A tiny percentage are in Europe.
- One of the founding principles in the European Union is the principle of solidarity. It basically means that a nation should be willing to meet the needs of all others, and all nations should care about the one. It is not right that we leave some countries, e.g. Greece or Italy, to struggle to care for and integrate so many refugees. If EU nations enjoy the privileges of being in the club, then surely they should also remember the principle of burden sharing among the EU Member States to cope with the numbers of asylum and welcome procedures. It also should lead to support for solutions in countries of origin and transit.
- Many local communities have felt overwhelmed with refugees travelling through or significant numbers being placed there, at least for the time being. It is not at all surprising that many have felt fearful. Others, battling with their own issues of housing or poverty, are resentful. Governments, with so many pressure upon them, have sometimes housed too many refugees in particular locations. Nevertheless,

let's rejoice that our nations offer stability, security and freedom which are so attractive to these refugees. And let's work hard to welcome refugees, helping them find their place in our society, offering Christ's love.