

Welcoming Strangers: A Mark of Christian Stewardship

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Companies that specialize in household moving tell us summer is their busiest time. Kids are out of school and families make changes. If you're planning an August move, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, there's a backlog for transporting your goods.

The 2010 U.S. Census data revealed that 37.5 million Americans moved that year. Many of them were moving to take advantage of better housing or to find new jobs. Undoubtedly, each of them experienced a certain amount of upheaval and rootlessness.

Worldwide, the United Nations reports over 43 million people are refugees or people displaced within their own countries due to political conflict, persecution, and calamitous natural disasters. And imagine – over half of these are children. These staggering numbers present a challenge and an opportunity for the Catholic steward.

A number of Catholic Charities agencies are actively involved in the resettlement of refugees. In our own country, many citizens have been uprooted from their homes due to recession and foreclosure. Most dioceses and parishes are actively involved in helping the homeless or the newly relocated. It only takes a phone call to discover how you can help with material assistance, food, or mentoring.

Many parishes experience a steady stream of new members, especially in the fall. Sometimes new parishioners slip through the cracks. Does your parish have a welcoming committee? Could you sponsor a welcoming event? If your parish doesn't offer a program to welcome new families, maybe you could get one started.

Recently, a news report featured a young man who had fled with his family to the Syrian-Turkish border to escape the Syrian government's repression. The man held his newborn son up to the camera. One could imagine a similar scene in the Gospel of Matthew where Joseph took Mary and fled with the infant Jesus into Egypt.

The movement of peoples is a story as old as history. At some time in our lives, most of us will probably feel as if we are strangers. How we respond to this feeling in others will be a mark of our Christian stewardship.