

## PRAYER FOCUS FOR MAY 2016

### *Be Open to Goodness and Mercy*

#### REFLECTION ONE

*Let us open the door of goodness and mercy,  
especially in changing public opinion  
regarding asylum seekers and refugees.*



At times it can almost be paralysing to watch the evening news and hear of so many deaths as result of suicide attacks, ongoing war and devastation, causing thousands to seek refuge so that they may live their lives in peace.

We can get lost in the maze of numbers of those seeking refuge, and so often public opinion turns against asylum seekers, fearing instead for our own safety and secure way of living.....

*But surely we are better than this...*

It is in moments like these, that we need to be reminded of Jesus' words:

**"I was a stranger and you welcomed me..," (Mt 25.36)**



Francis challenges us in his message for the 2016 World Day of Migrants and Refugees “At the heart of the Gospel of mercy the encounter and acceptance by others are intertwined with the encounter and acceptance of God himself. Welcoming others means welcoming God in person! Do not let yourselves be robbed of the hope and joy of life born of your experience of God’s mercy, as manifested in the people you meet on your journey!” (January 17, 2016)

One of the urgent calls in this year of Mercy is to help change public opinion by sharing a compassionate attitude which reflects the gospel message. Pope Francis reminds us: “ Public opinion needs to be correctly formed, not least to prevent unwarranted fears and speculations detrimental to migrants” ( January 17, 2016)



This is surely a challenge to each of us, no matter where we are, to help inform others of the challenge of the gospel of mercy.

So let us take time to pause, to pray, that our hearts will truly be open to mercy and goodness, and in this way, we can gradually help change public opinion so that a more welcoming attitude is possible for those who seek refuge.

*Compassionate God,  
'No one is a stranger to you  
and no one is ever far from your loving care.  
In your kindness  
watch over refugees and asylum seekers,  
those separated from their loved ones,  
those who are lost,  
and those who have been exiled from their homes.  
Bring them safely to the place  
where they long to be,  
and help us always to show your kindness to strangers and those in need.'*

*(Adapted from the Opening Prayer of the Mass for Refugees and Exile)*

## REFLECTION TWO

*Let us open our hearts to goodness and mercy,  
especially in regard to refugees.*



One of the pressing challenges to our time is our attitude to refugees. We all have a responsibility to 'roll open the door' by challenging public opinion in the way we share our beliefs with others.

Tim Winton reminds us of Jesus' words.

*"If a child asks for bread, will you give them a stone?"  
When children arrive on our shores,  
pleading for bread, for mercy, for safety, for refuge,  
do we give them what they desperately need?  
Or do we avert our gaze, turn them away,  
sending them packing with nothing but a stone?  
Children have asked us for bread, and we gave them stones.  
Truly we are better than this!"*

© 2015 "We are better than this." Foreword Tim Winton.  
Edited by Robyn Cadwallader. ATF Press, Adelaide.

There is an ever present need to be prophetic in the way we live our gospel life of mercy. When faced with a backlash against refugees and asylum seekers, we are called to be 'better than this', and to help change public opinion by the way we live our lives. Pope Francis challenged us with these words:

*“The Gospel of mercy remains an open book,  
which continues to be written.  
We are all called to become living writers of the Gospel,  
heralds of the Good News  
to all men and women today.  
We do this by practising  
the corporal and spiritual works of mercy,  
which are the hallmarks of the Christian life.  
By means of these simple yet powerful gestures,  
even when unseen,  
we can accompany the needy,  
bringing God’s tenderness and consolation.*

(3/4/2016 )

Although at times there seems to be an overwhelming wave of fear and prejudice against refugees, we are reminded that

*‘The stone which rolled away from the tomb of Jesus continues to roll away from every  
sort of grave. Goodness cannot be held, captured, or put to death.  
It evades its pursuers, escapes capture, slips away, hides out, even leaves the churches  
sometimes,  
but forever rises, again and again, all over the world. Such is the meaning of the  
resurrection.’*

(Column archives 28/3/2016 Fr Ron Rolheiser )

Let our time of prayer  
be one of opening the doors  
of our hearts,  
to goodness and mercy,  
so that a more humane  
and compassionate response  
can come forward  
to show that truly  
‘we are better than this!’



*Loving God,  
'awaken the consciousness of all peoples  
and their leaders ;  
raise up men and women  
full of love and generosity  
who can speak and act for peace and justice,  
and show us new ways  
in which hatreds can be left behind,  
wounds can be healed  
and unity can be restored. Amen.'*

*(Henri J.M. Nouwen. A Cry for Mercy)*

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