

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort from The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

The Salvation Army is concerned for the needs of people who are refugees and asylum seekers. People are fleeing their homes and countries because of fear of persecution. Many have experienced significant grief and trauma, which has potential long-term consequences for their health and well-being.

We recognize the ability to seek asylum as a basic human right. All people have the right to life, liberty and security of person. We support international efforts to eliminate persecution and displacement by promoting peace, tolerance, and respect for human life and dignity.

We condemn the actions of anyone who seeks to gain from the plight of refugees. We recognize that nations control their borders, but believe there is also a duty to care for the displaced. Therefore, working together to address the needs of such is critical. We hold that asylum seekers and refugees should be aided to settle and become contributing members of society as quickly as possible.

Globally, there are now millions of such persons. In some nations, war has resulted in a mass exit of people who fear for their lives. In others, refugees have experienced violence and persecution relating to their ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality or social status. Persecuted persons are vulnerable to people smuggling, human trafficking and dangerous risk-taking.

Nations feel the pressure of meeting the needs of people seeking asylum, particularly when they arrive in large number, and some in our country are hostile towards refugees.

But, people who arrive in the United States, regardless of their method of arrival, are entitled to seek refugee protection. We are one of 146 countries, including all of the free world and most of the rest of it, who signed the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The protections granted to refugees include the right not to be expelled, and the rights to work, housing, education, public assistance, freedom of movement and freedom of religion.

The Salvation Army believes human life is created in the image of God and is a gift to be cherished, nurtured and redeemed. The sanctity of human life means we treat all people with dignity. Dignity is neither conferred nor withheld by citizenship, human choice or plight; it is inherent in every person. In Scripture, God's love and compassion extends to all people and includes special provision for the foreigner and those whose circumstances leave them in need of the care of strangers.

God, who was refuge, provider and comforter for the people of ancient Israel, makes it clear that we are to remember their flight to freedom and safety and extend a welcome to others in their time of need. The Bible states, '[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.'

Not only are foreigners to be the subject of compassion and special provision, they are to be welcomed as neighbors. There is no doubt that divine law requires us to love our neighbor as one of our own, even if they come from a different background, culture or religion.

I do recognize that this can be a hard thing to do, especially with the haze of politics swirling around it all, but I am confident you can do it.

Grace and peace to you. This has been Lt. Roger McCort with today's KINS Community Comment.