

WORLD DAY OF MIGRANTS & REFUGEES

SEPTEMBER 25, 2022



“Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees” is the theme chosen by the Holy Father for the **108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees (WDMR)**. Pope Francis highlights the commitment that we are all called to share in building a future that embraces God’s plan, leaving no one behind.

“Building the future with migrants and refugees” means *recognizing and valuing how much each of them can contribute to the process of construction.*

Refugees are not just people

Brad Rozairo, OMI

A refugee from Burundi who was a chemistry student escaped violence and political stability in his home country and ended up at a refugee camp in Kenya. A few years ago, he started making soap in the refugee camp. The Covid-19 pandemic has given his business a boost, as many look for soap which has become a major weapon in the fight against coronavirus. One way to keep the virus away is to wash hands frequently.

When this man spoke to BBC he said, *“Everyone needs soap but not everybody is able to afford it. So, I lowered the prices, as it was more important to protect people than to think of profit”*. Further, he said, *“I had to increase my production by 75% to meet the demand when the pandemic started, so Covid-19 has been good for my business. But I made sure I gave free soap to vulnerable people such as the elderly and the disabled.”*

A few refugees that I have come across are very community-oriented people like this young man. I think their experience has taught them what it is to struggle for survival. Therefore, when they see people going through pain and suffering in life, they go forward to give them a helping hand. Our countries and cultures may differ, but as human beings when we struggle to come up in life, we break all barriers and try to show our solidarity with others.

When the lockdown came into effect in Japan, there were many refugees, migrants and technical intern trainees who lost their jobs. During this time, the office for Migrants and Refugees in the Archdiocese of Osaka took the initiative to help medical institutions and nursing homes by making disposable Medical Protective Gowns. These gowns were made by refugees and migrants as their social contribution! One afternoon when I visited the office for Migrants and Refugees I was given a briefing about the work of some refugees, and I witnessed two of them making the Medical Protective Gowns in a room at the Osaka Cathedral. They looked happy in what they were doing.

Friends, as missionaries, we know that it is not easy to enter into another culture, or as some would say to put oneself in the shoes of people very different from us and understand their minds. As a result, we often refuse to encounter the other and build barriers to defend ourselves. Local communities are sometimes afraid that the newly arrived will disturb the established order and make them feel uncomfortable. The newly arrived also have fears: they are afraid of confrontation, judgment, discrimination and failure. But when there is a ‘give and take’ attitude between the newly arrived and the locals, it may open up possibilities to know each other better, and thereby help build bridges.



With MIGRANTS & REFUGEES