



By Elder Patrick Kearon
Of the Seventy

I humbly testify and pray that we will always remember Him—in all times, all things, and all places we may be in.³⁰ In the sacred and holy name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

NOTES

1. “We’ll Sing All Hail to Jesus’ Name,” *Hymns*, no. 182.
2. Joseph Smith Translation, Genesis 9:22 (in the Bible appendix).
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–16.
4. See Doctrine and Covenants 45:26; 88:91.
5. Psalm 20:7.
6. “Be Still, My Soul,” *Hymns*, no. 124.
7. 2 Timothy 3:1; see also verses 2–7.
8. Doctrine and Covenants 3:3.
9. *Kierkegaard’s Journals and Notebooks: Volume 2, Journals EE–KK*, Bruce H. Kirmmse and others, ed. (2008), 2:179; emphasis in original.
10. See “Count Your Blessings,” *Hymns*, no. 241.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 58:42; see also Isaiah 43:25.
12. Enos 1:7, 8.
13. Isaiah 43:26.
14. See Moroni 10:32.
15. See John 14:6.
16. Psalm 24:3; see also verse 4; experience used with permission.
17. T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding,” in *Four Quartets* (1943), section 5, lines 241–42.
18. See, for example, Ether 12:23–28; Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Come, Join with Us,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2013, 21–24.
19. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 522. He continues here, “Must I, then, be thrown away as a thing of naught?”
20. See Doctrine and Covenants 27:2–4 for modern revelation on the use of water instead of wine.
21. Joseph Smith Translation, Mark 14:21 (in the Bible appendix).
22. See Moroni 4:3; 5:2; Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79.
23. See Alma 34:20–21, 28–29. In modern revelation, the Lord likewise enjoins us, “Remember in all things the poor and the needy, the sick and the afflicted” (Doctrine and Covenants 52:40).
24. See 3 Nephi 11:14–15.
25. Alma 40:23.
26. See Doctrine and Covenants 6:37.
27. See 3 Nephi 27:14; see also, for example, John 12:32–33; 1 Nephi 11:33; Mosiah 23:22; Alma 13:29; 33:19; Helaman 8:14–15.
28. Isaiah 49:15–16; see also 1 Nephi 21:15–16.
29. Doctrine and Covenants 45:52.
30. See Mosiah 18:9.

Refuge from the Storm

This moment does not define the refugees, but our response will help define us.

“For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: “Naked, and ye clothed me. . . . “ . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”¹

There are an estimated 60 million refugees in the world today, which means that “1 in every 122 humans . . . has been forced to flee their homes,”² and half of these are children.³ It is shocking to consider the numbers involved and to reflect on what this means in each individual life. My current assignment is in Europe, where one and a quarter million of these refugees have arrived over the last year from war-torn parts of the Middle East and Africa.⁴ We see many of them coming with only the clothes they are wearing and what they can carry in one small bag. A large proportion of them are well educated, and all have had to abandon homes, schools, and jobs.

Under the direction of the First Presidency, the Church is working with 75 organizations in 17 European countries. These organizations range from large international institutions to small community initiatives, from

government agencies to faith-based and secular charities. We are fortunate to partner with and learn from others who have been working with refugees around the world for many years.

As members of the Church, as a people, we don’t have to look back far in our history to reflect on times when we were refugees, violently driven from homes and farms over and over again. Last weekend in speaking of refugees, Sister Linda Burton asked the women of the Church to consider, “What if *their* story were *my* story?”⁵ Their story *is* our story, not that many years ago.

There are highly charged arguments in governments and across society regarding what the definition of a refugee is and what should be done to assist the refugees. My remarks are not intended in any way to form part of that heated discussion, nor to comment on immigration policy, but rather to focus on the *people* who have been driven from their homes and their countries by wars that they had no hand in starting.

The Savior knows how it feels to be a refugee—He was one. As a young child, Jesus and His family fled to Egypt to escape the murderous swords of Herod. And at various points in His ministry, Jesus found



Himself threatened and His life in danger, ultimately submitting to the designs of evil men who had plotted His death. Perhaps, then, it is all the more remarkable to us that He repeatedly taught us to love one another, to love as He loves, to love our neighbor as ourselves. Truly, “pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction”⁶ and to “look to the poor and the needy, and administer to their relief that they shall not suffer.”⁷

It has been inspiring to witness what Church members from around the world have generously donated to help these individuals and families who have lost so much. Across Europe specifically, I have seen many members of the Church who have experienced a joyful awakening and enriching of the soul as they have responded to that deep, innate desire to reach out and serve those in such extreme need around them. The Church has provided shelter and medical care. Stakes and missions have

assembled many thousands of hygiene kits. Other stakes have provided food and water, clothing, waterproof coats, bicycles, books, backpacks, reading glasses, and much more.

Individuals from Scotland to Sicily have stepped in to every conceivable role. Doctors and nurses have volunteered their services at the point where refugees arrive soaked, chilled, and often traumatized from their water crossings. As refugees begin the resettlement process, local members are helping them learn the language of their host country, while others are lifting the spirits of both children and parents by providing toys, art supplies, music, and play. Some are taking donated yarn, knitting needles, and crochet hooks and teaching these skills to local refugees old and young.

Seasoned members of the Church who have given years of service and leadership attest to the fact that ministering to these people so immediately in need has provided the richest, most fulfilling experience in their service so far.

The reality of these situations must be seen to be believed. In winter I met, amongst many others, a pregnant woman from Syria in a refugee transit camp desperately seeking assurance that she would not need to deliver her baby on the cold floors of the vast hall where she was housed. Back in Syria she had been a university professor. And in Greece I spoke with a family still wet, shivering, and frightened from their crossing in a small rubber boat from Turkey. After looking into their eyes and hearing their stories, both of the terror they had fled and of their perilous journey to find refuge, I will never be the same.

Extending care and aid is a vast range of dedicated relief workers, many of them volunteers. I saw in action a member of the Church who, for many months, worked through the night, providing for the most immediate needs of those arriving from Turkey into Greece. Among countless other endeavors, she administered first aid to those in most critical medical need; she saw that the women and children traveling alone were cared for; she held those who had been bereaved along the way and did her best to allocate limited resources to limitless need. She, as so many like her, has been a literal ministering angel, whose deeds are not forgotten by those she cared for, nor by the Lord, on whose errand she was.

All who have given of themselves to relieve the suffering around them are much like the people of Alma: “And thus, in their prosperous circumstances, they did not send away any who were naked, or that were hungry, or that were athirst, or that were sick, or that had not been nourished; . . . they were liberal to all, both old and young, both bond and free, both male and female, whether out of the church or in the

church, having no respect to persons as to those who stood in need.”⁸

We must be careful that news of the refugees’ plight does not somehow become commonplace when the initial shock wears off and yet the wars continue and the families keep coming. Millions of refugees worldwide, whose stories no longer make the news, are still in desperate need of help.

If you are asking, “What can I do?” let us first remember that we should not serve at the expense of our families and other responsibilities,⁹ nor should we expect our leaders to organize projects for us. But as youth, men, women, and families, we can join in this great humanitarian endeavor.

In response to the invitation from the First Presidency to participate in Christlike service to refugees worldwide,¹⁰ the general presidencies of the Relief Society, Young Women, and Primary have organized a relief effort entitled “I Was a Stranger.”

Sister Burton introduced this to the women of the Church last weekend in the general women’s session. There are multiple helpful ideas, resources, and suggestions for service on IWasAStranger.lds.org.

Begin on your knees in prayer. Then think in terms of doing something close to home, in your own community, where you will find people who need help in adapting to their new circumstances. The ultimate aim is their rehabilitation to an industrious and self-reliant life.

The possibilities for us to lend a hand and be a friend are endless. You might help resettled refugees learn their host country language, update their work skills, or practice job interviewing. You could offer to mentor a family or a single mother as they transition to an unfamiliar culture, even with something as simple as accompanying them to the grocery store or the school. Some wards and stakes have existing

trusted organizations to partner with. And, according to your circumstances, you can give to the Church’s extraordinary humanitarian effort.

Additionally, each one of us can increase our awareness of the world events that drive these families from their homes. We must take a stand against intolerance and advocate respect and understanding across cultures and traditions. Meeting refugee families and hearing their stories with your own ears, and not from a screen or newspaper, will change you. Real friendships will develop and will foster compassion and successful integration.

The Lord has instructed us that the stakes of Zion are to be “a defense” and “a refuge from the storm.”¹¹ We have found refuge. Let us come out from our safe places and share with them, from our abundance, *hope* for a brighter future, *faith* in God and in our fellowman, and *love* that sees beyond cultural and ideological differences to the





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glorious truth that we are all children of our Heavenly Father.

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love.”¹²

Being a refugee may be a defining moment in the lives of those who are refugees, but being a refugee does not define *them*. Like countless thousands before them, this will be a period—we hope a short period—in their lives. Some of them will go on to be Nobel laureates, public servants, physicians, scientists, musicians, artists, religious leaders, and contributors in other fields. Indeed, many of them *were* these things before they lost everything. This moment does not define them, but our response will help define us.

“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”¹³ In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

For further reference, see IWasAStranger.lds.org and mormonchannel.org/blog/post/40-ways-to-help-refugees-in-your-community.

NOTES

1. Matthew 25:35–36, 40.
2. See Stephanie Nebehay, “World’s Refugees and Displaced Exceed Record 60 Million,” Dec. 18, 2015, reuters.com.
3. See “Facts and Figures about Refugees,” unhcr.org.uk/about-us/key-facts-and-figures.html.
4. See “A Record 1.25 Million Asylum Seekers Arrived in the EU Last Year,” Mar. 4, 2016, businessinsider.com.
5. Linda K. Burton, “I Was a Stranger,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2016, 14.
6. James 1:27.
7. Doctrine and Covenants 38:35; see also Doctrine and Covenants 81:5.
8. Alma 1:30.
9. See First Presidency letter, Mar. 26, 2016; see also Mosiah 4:27.
10. See First Presidency letter, Oct. 27, 2015.
11. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6; see also Isaiah 4:5–6.
12. 2 Timothy 1:7.
13. Matthew 25:40.

Opposition in All Things

Opposition permits us to grow toward what our Heavenly Father would have us become.

Central to the gospel of Jesus Christ is the Father’s plan of salvation for the eternal progress of His children. That plan, explained in modern revelation, helps us understand many things we face in mortality. My message focuses on the essential role of opposition in that plan.

I.

The purpose of mortal life for the children of God is to provide the experiences needed “to progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny as heirs of eternal life.”¹ As President Thomas S. Monson taught us so powerfully this morning, we progress by making choices, by which we are tested to show that we will keep God’s commandments (see Abraham 3:25). To be tested, we must have the agency to choose between alternatives. To provide alternatives on which to exercise our agency, we must have opposition.

The rest of the plan is also essential. When we make wrong choices—as we inevitably will—we are soiled by sin and must be cleansed to proceed toward our eternal destiny. The Father’s plan provides the way to do this, the way to satisfy the eternal demands of justice: a Savior pays the

price to redeem us from our sins. That Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father, whose atoning sacrifice—whose suffering—pays the price for our sins if we will repent of them.

One of the best explanations of the planned role of opposition is in the Book of Mormon, in Lehi’s teachings to his son Jacob.

“It must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things. If not so, . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass, neither wickedness, neither holiness nor misery, neither good nor bad” (2 Nephi 2:11; see also verse 15).

As a result, Lehi continued, “the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. Wherefore, man could not act for himself save it should be that he was enticed by the one or the other” (verse 16). Similarly, in modern revelation the Lord declares, “It must needs be that the devil should tempt the children of men, or they could not be agents unto themselves” (D&C 29:39).

Opposition was necessary in the Garden of Eden. If Adam and Eve had not made the choice that introduced mortality, Lehi taught, “they would have remained in a state of innocence, . . . doing no good, for they knew no sin” (2 Nephi 2:23).