

THE GROUND OF JUSTICE

The Report of a Pastoral Research Enquiry into
the Needs of Migrants in London's Catholic Community

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements
Introduction

Section One: Aims, Scope and Context

- 1.1 The Research Questions
- 1.2 The Scope of the Study
- 1.3 A Note on the Catholic Church and Social Research

Section Two: The People and Their Stories

- 2.1 Catholic “Londoners”
 - 2.1.1 Global Origin
 - 2.1.2 Time in the UK
 - 2.1.3 Age Structure, Marital Status and Gender
 - 2.1.4 Educational Attainment
 - 2.1.5 Planned Length of Stay
- 2.2 Real Lives From Four Global Regions – Some Narratives

Section Three: Consistent Initial Findings

- 3.1 The Fear of “Rhetorical Solidarity”
- 3.2 An “Irregular” and “Struggling” Church

Section Four: Social Needs

- 4.1 Work And Income
 - 4.1.1 Employment Status
 - 4.1.2 Working Hours and Pay
 - 4.1.3 Women and Work
 - 4.1.4 Working Conditions and (In)Human Relations
- 4.2 Housing, Accommodation, Home and The New Racism
 - 4.2.1 Accommodation Type and Quality
 - 4.2.2 Homeless Migrants
 - 4.2.3 Homelessness Further Examined

Section Five: In Search of Community and Solidarity

- 5.1 “Being Home”
- 5.2 Unions, Associational Life and Social Capital

Section Six: Church – A Source of Sure and Certain Hope

- 6.1 Church – Home Away From Home
- 6.2 Expectations From the Church
- 6.3 “Spirituality” And “Spiritual” Matters

Section Seven: A Committed But Stretched Clergy

- 7.1 A Priest’s Eye View
- 7.2 Particular Problems

Section Eight: Recommendations

- 8.1 Financial Resources
- 8.2 Pastoral Policy and Appointments
- 8.3 New Initiatives, and Education and Best Practice Sharing
- 8.4 Training
- 8.5 Communications, Support and an “Ethical Portal”
- 8.6 Policy Discussion and Reflection
- 8.7 Prophetic Preaching

Section Nine: Conclusion

Selected Bibliography

Acknowledgements

Executive Summary: To Follow

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Introduction

The Catholic Church in Britain is undergoing a shift in its ethnic make up, social diversity and relationship with the rest of the international Catholic community. In turn this is beginning to impact on debates about its local self-image and relationship with the wider civic realm. It also means that certain public policies and private sector housing and employment practices are impacting on sections of the Catholic populace in new ways. Regular and irregular migration into Britain is a key driver of this process.

These changes have been variously described as the Catholic community's "greatest opportunity" and "its greatest threat". The Church has responded instinctively and positively in many cases. In others it has been overwhelmed by the scale of the new challenge.

Just as importantly, while the Catholic community constitutes the most active worshipping faith community in England and Wales, the changes it faces remain largely outside the considered focus and evidence base of Departments of State concerned with social cohesion, social inclusion, health and economic development. It just about registers in some local authority areas. In both civil society and the state new times need new initiatives.

The Catholic Bishops of London began to make their response to this changing landscape known publicly in May 2006 by calling together a major and multi-lingual Mass of celebration of migrant communities at Westminster Cathedral. They knew that their Church had done much but sensed that there was much more that needed to be done.

After the service a *London Citizens* Migrant Workers Association was launched with support from the Muslim Council of Britain, TGWU, UNISON and others. Cardinal Murphy O'Connor spoke at the launch.

Separately but simultaneously the Cardinal, Archbishop Kevin McDonald and Bishop Thomas McMahon commissioned the present study from the Centre For the Study of Faith in Society at the Von Hügel Institute, St Edmund's College, University of Cambridge (www.vhi.org.uk)

According to the preaching at the migrants Mass such a pastoral concern and stance sits in the very mainstream of London's Catholic Episcopal history. London's Catholic Bishops, from Cardinal Manning (1865 - 1892) to Cardinal Hume (1976-1999), have identified intense social need and founded new institutions by which to respond to it. Our research reveals that once again it can be said that "close under the Abbey walls of Westminster there lie concealed labyrinths and courts and alleys" where is found a population encountering intense poverty, "in large measure Catholic" and which charitable and statutory committees are struggling to reach (Wiseman quoted in McLelland 1962). From Paris to Los Angeles, New York to Sydney, Johannesburg to Mexico City the Cardinals and Bishops of the Catholic communion are encountering similar pastoral needs and undertaking similar patterns of reflection.

Consequently, it is remarkable that in recent times Cardinal Murphy O'Connor has commented publicly that at the migrants Mass on 1st May 2006 he felt the spirit of Cardinal Manning as being close and that Henry Manning's leadership could be a model for the Church in London today. This would be a demanding path indeed and one that would need much reflection.

According to his biographers, Manning had five key practical dimensions to his ministry in "defence" of the migrant poor. Firstly, he redirected capital investment in ecclesiastical buildings and

projects to invest them in revenue costs for new social welfare institutions and additional people resources at the neighbourhood level. Secondly, he worked hard to persuade fellow English Bishops of the legitimacy of the migrant cause. Thirdly, he faced down opposition within the English Catholic community and the wider society to his position suggesting that “a soul without a body is a spirit and a body without a soul is a corpse”. Fourthly, Manning was convinced that ideas and words must have consequences and lead to deeds, for these were what would be judged at the last times. Lastly, he spoke powerfully in the public realm in support of the primacy of labour over capital and against the “sin of exacting the most rent while doing the least repairs” (McLelland 1962; Gray 1985; Von Arx 1988). We have found that a renewed pastoral vision grounded in this spirit would meet with acclaim in the poorest parts of London’s Catholic community today. The “least” are now in the Church’s congregations and, from our research, they look to their Bishops and pastors in hope.

This is not to say that there is not a huge amount of work going on already. There is and those at the coalface of engagement are to be admired for the quality and scope of their dedication and commitment. They have told us though that a good deal of the time they feel inadequately supported, that the current structures and policies of the Church are struggling to keep up with the changing pastoral reality and that the shifting sands of state policy, voluntary sector overload and private sector behaviour can be much worse still. Now the whole Church in London will have the opportunity to own the reality of Catholic life today and respond to it with the same confidence.

SECTION ONE: AIMS, SCOPE AND CONTEXT

1.1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The title of this report is *Eucharist: The Ground of Justice*. It is the first publication of a pastoral enquiry, a research study into the lives of many of those who gather in the parishes and congregations of the Catholic Church in London.

Our brief was to undertake an exploratory study to enquire into the lived experience of those members of the Church who have travelled from other parts of the world – but within a Church with a universal understanding of its identity and membership – to the increasingly global city of London. Based on this enquiry our brief was also to make recommendations to the Church as to ways in which it might improve its current work and engagement with and for migrants.

We have focused on three particular research questions, namely:

- (i) What are the current life experiences of migrants who attend Catholic congregations?
- (ii) What are their needs?
- (iii) What are their perceptions and expectations of the Church and its agencies?

1.2 THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This report is the pastoral report to the Bishops and focuses on research evidence from parishes, ethnic parishes and Catholic agencies covered by parishes. It constitutes the main document to support Episcopal reflection and Diocesan discussion of alternative practical pastoral strategies going forward. A subsequent publication will focus in particular on Catholic schools which are experiencing significant new challenges due to migration. The final report will combine these two publications and give a more academic account of the research methodology, more detailed research findings, objective limitations, lessons learned and suggestions for further research.

This report will also be followed by an agreed extension of the *Eucharist: Ground of Justice* research enquiry to both rural and urban areas of the Archdiocese of Birmingham. We also have support from the Polish Mission to extend the study to its Churches across the country and, wherever necessary, in consultation with local Ordinaries on a Diocese by Diocese basis, will extend the study there too. A smaller study of the experience of Catholic migrant workers in the NHS will add to the insights that we are recording and then a further study will focus on the spiritualities of diaspora communities. In time for the May 7th 2007 migrants Mass we will also, in very close collaboration with the three Dioceses, prepare a pastoral handbook for parishes working with migrants that will also be available beyond London. This programme of work will be conducted by a new *Migration and Itinerant Peoples Group* which is part of the Von Hügel Institute's response to the needs we have uncovered in the present study. The founding advisory committee for this group includes Commodore Chris York (Director, Apostleship of The Sea); Marius Wanders (Secretary General Caritas Europa); Margaret Ann Fiskin (Barrister at Law and Chair of the Catholic Association For Racial Justice), Bishop Crispian Hollis and Professor Peter Coleman (University of Southampton).

While we have not sought to statistically balance the national origin of respondents, nor to use random sampling which was not suitable for our purposes, we have sought to allow migrants voices to

speak, where possible, for themselves and have used both qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve this. We have surveyed 1000 people attending Mass in London in three Dioceses. The congregations involved were drawn from mainstream Diocesan parishes, ethnic chaplaincies and parishes of the Polish Vicariate. Anonymous questionnaires were available in Polish, French, Chinese, Lithuanian, Spanish, and Portuguese as well as English. Filipino experience is recorded in the Asian category at this stage. We also conducted individual interviews and focus groups within and across national groups of migrants and, seeking as unbiased findings as possible by using different sources, interviewed over 20 Episcopal, curial and parochial clergy along with representatives of Catholic agencies and Religious Orders working with newly arrived migrants. We also held two meetings with all the ethnic chaplaincies and a mid-study validation meeting with representatives from each of the commissioning Dioceses.

The diversity of this series of entry points to the research is significant. There has been a tendency in some research projects and proposals to merge a perception of the parochial structure of the Church of England with those of the Catholic Church in this country and then draw seemingly purposeful distinctions between such models of Church and the structures of other denominations and faith communities. In addition to the fact that there have always been fundamental differences in the social class, and historical experience of Catholics in Britain, Anglicans and other denominations, the impact of ethnic chaplaincies as part of the current social reality makes a merging of Christian denominational experiences for analytical purposes potentially misleading. Arguably parts of Catholicism in Britain are re-emerging as diaspora faith communities with conjoint relationships to global regions of origins.

By social science standards we have used a meaningful exploratory sample. To our knowledge, this publication draws upon the largest survey of its kind. It has certainly reached right across the London areas of our three commissioning Dioceses and reflects the reality and hopes that we have encountered.

1.3 A NOTE ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SOCIAL RESEARCH

Historically there have at times been complaints among some theologians of Catholic Christianity when empirical research evidence has seemed to suggest criticism of the Church and her institutions, or uncovered an aspect of pastoral need where the Church has not been responding as creatively as one side or another of a view would like (Greeley 2004). Those who have felt threatened by such findings have complained that “the interviewers must have interviewed the *wrong* Catholics” or “Catholics who were *too* liberal (or conservative)”. The researchers have pointed to standard social science research techniques and sample relevance only to be told that they are “inadequately theological” or “have an agenda”. We too, even before research commencement, have encountered such hesitation: We have been told by the “leadership” of some communities that “young Eastern Europeans were trained to lie to researchers by the communist system”, that “if some migrants do not want to touch a trade union this is because they are being poisoned”, or that ascertaining social needs of parishioners is a distraction from “real religious needs” and is consequently “inadequately spiritual”. We have been approached to ascertain our “position” on the “London minimum wage” and “our support” or not of the Cardinal’s “positions”. We have been contacted by individuals who strongly object to the Church’s recent focus on migrants at, in their view, “the expense of UK citizens.”

We have assumed that the people we have interviewed and surveyed are legitimate interpreters of their own lives. We have not sought to reduce any religious language that they have used to its political, economic or other reductive base or to judge it as a “strategy” of any sort. In this sense we have taken religious – and specifically Catholic – epistemology and sense making seriously as a

means by which those surveyed make sense of their human reality.

Suffice to say that we have undertaken the research with an open mind. That some have sought to act as “gatekeepers”, others as “advocates” and others to foreclose on the project as a whole, and the reasons they have given for this, is – of course – a research finding in its own right and one to which we will return in our final report.

SECTION TWO: THE PEOPLE AND THEIR STORIES

2.1. CATHOLIC “LONDONERS”

The accession of eight new Central and East European countries to the European Union has without doubt given rise to new challenges and opportunities for the Catholic Church in London. According to one agency director we interviewed 2000 people from Central and Eastern Europe arrive at Victoria coach station every week.

Some research has suggested that the UK attracts the migrants it deserves and in Britain the more entrepreneurial have made their way to our cities. Other research touches upon the consequent tensions that arise between those who fled oppression at the hands of Nazi or Soviet persecution and who have longed for the freedom of their homeland and more recent arrivals who come seeking gold on the streets of the capital with a less powerful commitment to the traditional idea of “home” and “nation”. (CRONEM; Brown 2003). Either way the Treasury sees these new arrivals as absolutely integral to securing its economic growth and inflation targets. (Financial Times 2007).

In London we have noted such patterns but we want to stress that we have also found that these are not the only sources of social change in the ethnic, racial and linguistic make up of parishes. New arrivals from the Chinese diaspora and Africa, Latin America and South and South East Asia to name but four global regions or networks now add to the multinational makeup of the Church in London.

2.1.1 GLOBAL ORIGIN

Turning to our survey, just under half of our respondents were from Central and Eastern Europe - for the sake of brevity we will from this point refer to them as being from Eastern Europe. The other half was roughly equally divided between Africa, Latin America and Asia (including the Philippines) (Figure 1). They represented 70 different nationalities in total.

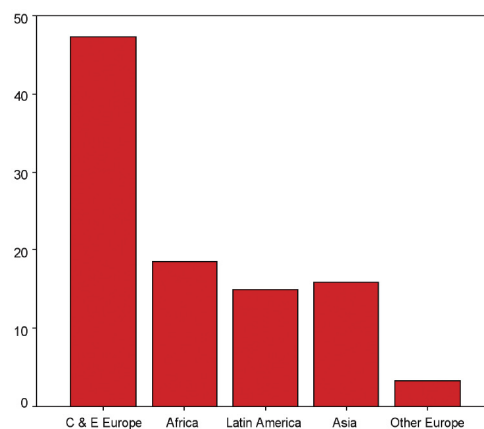


Figure 1. Home Regions of the Surveyed Migrants

2.1.2 TIME IN THE UK

Of all those surveyed about half had arrived in the last five years and half before that. 73% had been in the country since not earlier than 1995.

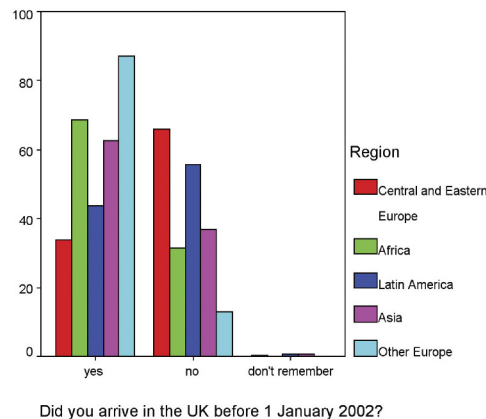


Figure 2. Respondents' Time of Arrival in the UK

There was considerable variation between global regions of origin when it came to length of time in the country. In our sample there were more recent migrants (those who arrived in the last 5 years) among East Europeans and Latin Americans than among Africans and Asians (Figure 2). This is likely due to more recent processes such as EU enlargement, political change in South East Europe and economic crises (Latin America). In the African case the responses may also reflect the levels of irregularity and a desire to be imprecise out of self-protection. Migrants we interviewed provided more specific information about the circumstances of, and motivation behind, their arrival in the UK:

Box 1

I came to England about 3 years ago (in August 2003). Although it wasn't easy to get through immigration, somehow I managed to convince them that I was coming to visit my relatives. Two months later I learned that it was possible to get a business visa, which I did and as a result was able to stay in the UK legally. I had to borrow some money to pay for this service of course, although now I know that it was ridiculous since it's possible to get such visa for free. Since that time I didn't have to be afraid any more, unlike during those two months, when we all used to run out of the house upon hearing somebody knocking on the door. [Lithuanian woman].

Box 2

I didn't want to leave Poland. But at the same time I knew I could never do there what I really wanted to do. My big passion was to coach kids in ice-skating and I did it for some time. But I got paid only three months later and I don't even want to say how much it was... Then I told myself, "wake up, how are you going to survive?" So I was crying when I was leaving Poland but I didn't expect my parents to support me when I was 27 years old. [Polish woman]

2.1.3 AGE STRUCTURE, MARITAL STATUS AND GENDER

We wanted to know something about the age structure of those we surveyed and again found variation: East European migrants tended to be younger (64% were below 35) followed by Latin Americans (45.6% below 35). There is a correlation between this relative youth and time of arrival in the UK, with younger people having arrived more recently. Migrants from these two groups are also more likely to be single (over 40% in both cases), which reflects both their age and the

precariousness of their recorded economic position. Overall 62% of our respondents were female, with a slightly higher percentage of women among Latin American (69%) and Asian (67%) migrants. This confirms the reports of some clergy that we interviewed that they have a certain female majority among their parishioners. As we will illustrate later, this increases the vulnerability of Catholic migrants even further since the migrant women surveyed tended to find themselves in even poorer economic and social conditions than men.

2.1.4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

We asked about respondents' formal educational attainment levels. The aim was to assess the level of skills and knowledge available to the UK from Catholic migrants and whether educational attainment influenced their life experiences and economic situation.

The best-educated migrants in the surveyed sample were from Africa (51% have university education), although the highest number of people with postgraduate degrees was among East Europeans (25.8%). Latin Americans tended to have the lowest educational attainment (82% have college education and lower) (Figure 3). They also tended to speak poorer English (1 in 3 of Latin Americans reported that they have poor English skills). African and Asian migrants have the highest proficiency in English. The East Europeans fell in-between these two points with 1 in 5 saying they have poor English skills (Figure 4).

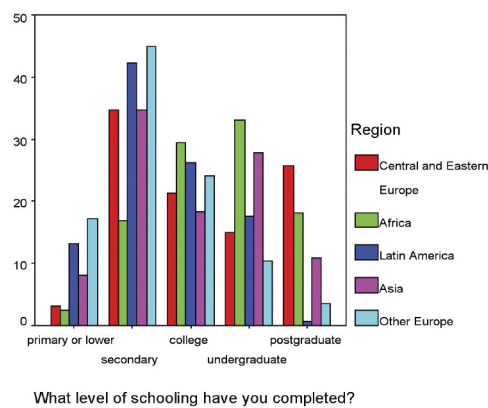


Figure 3. Educational Attainment of the Surveyed Migrants

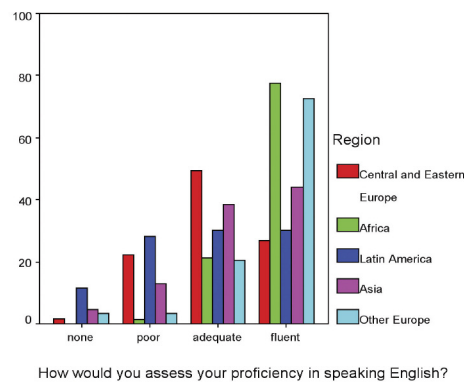


Figure 4. Respondents' Level of English Skills

2.1.5 PLANNED LENGTH OF STAY

There are a plethora of anecdotal views expressed as to whether the presence of migrants is a short-term factor or a long-term phenomenon. Some ethnic chaplains reported with conviction that their flock did not intend to stay only for us to discover that this was not necessarily the case. Others extrapolated the intentions of migrants with a particular region of origin as applying normatively. We have reported the length of current stay and sought to identify future plans to give some form of a basis to longer term pastoral planning.

41% of the respondents stated that they planned to stay for more than five years or indefinitely. 37% said they were not sure. We also found a statistically significant correlation between the time of arrival in the UK and intention to stay: the longer respondents have been in the country the longer they intend to stay, not least due to the fact that earlier arrival in the UK is also correlated with better language skills, higher income, better quality of accommodation and – as we shall see – reduced social isolation.

Box 3

Some Poles will probably settle down here, especially those who have families and children with them. But I think many people will go back as the life in Poland improves. Also, it became difficult to find a job in London and even outside London. The pay is low and the living is expensive, so many people spend everything they earn and in that case they are not better off than in Poland. Even worse, given the loneliness and being away from the family. Besides, a campaign is on in Poland to attract people back to the country which begins to lack workers. On the other hand, those who have nothing to come back to will probably stay here. Back in Poland many people of my age are not able to get a mortgage or even to rent a flat. They are really desperate, that's why they come here. [Polish woman]

Cautiously we estimate that, in addition to Mass goers there are at least as many baptised Catholic migrants again, of all backgrounds, in London and in some national groups – Poles, Lithuanians, Chinese, Latin Americans - this figure would leap to much higher multiples.

2.2. REAL LIVES FROM FOUR GLOBAL REGIONS – SOME NARRATIVES

For the purpose of our analysis, and to protect the confidentiality of respondents, we have focused our statistical analysis into four global regions: Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America. Before turning to our quantitative data, in this section we record a number of qualitative case studies from among those we have interviewed.

These personal narratives stand in their own right but they are also symbolic of a series of wider patterns. These include: the significance of “employment agencies” as an intermediary in the migration process; the varying experience of migration between generations of the same region of origin; the significance of remittances to many groups; and the housing and economic vulnerability and isolation faced by most upon arrival. More hopefully, what begins to emerge from these qualitative narratives is the solace found in attending Church. This combines both a sense of “believingness” – a fulfilment of religious celebration - and a sense of “belongingness” – having a bodily community with whom to engage, especially in the face of social and linguistic isolation. These are patterns to which we will return.

Case 1

Pavel is from Poland, he is 21 years of age and speaks little English. Pavel came to the UK after visiting an employment agency in Poland which gave him a telephone number to ring when he got to the UK for a job and

accommodation. Pavel paid the agency a fee for this information. When Pavel arrived in Victoria station, he tried to ring the number, but soon found that the number did not exist, neither did the accommodation. As a result, Pavel ended up sleeping rough in Victoria.

Soon after, Pavel met up with other Polish people as many were arriving in Victoria Coach station. One day after speaking with some Polish people, who said they could find housing for Pavel, he followed them down an alleyway where he was robbed of all of his belongings and of his ID papers. Pavel became very desperate. He knew that he could not return home because it would be shameful to do so but also it was difficult to trust anybody as he had been lied to and robbed from the beginning. But Pavel had little choice... Pavel followed other Poles to a squat filled with older Polish people who were drinking alcohol excessively and taking a lot of drugs. There was no electricity or water in the squat; it was run by a Polish gang. Pavel ended up sleeping in a squat for a period of time.

Fortunately, one day, Pavel heard about the Cardinal Hume Centre through listening to conversations. On arrival he was helped by staff at the Centre who offered food and refreshment, a shower, a laundry service and advice. Pavel was referred to the Centre's Charity shop for clothing and he was linked with Westminster Council and police enabling him to get replacement ID papers. Pavel was referred to the Centre's ESOL service to help him to improve his English language skills and during this time he was also referred to the local Job Centre which had a staff member working specifically with the Eastern Europeans. Soon after Pavel found a job working as a kitchen porter.

Case 2

I work in a shop. I am paid £3.50 per hour. On average I work 60 hours a week. From this I pay the shop owner for accommodation in one of the houses he owns. With food included this costs me £60 per week. I send some money home to my family as I have a sister and a mother. It costs me quite a lot if I go to Western Union. I try to send the money with friends. Sometimes it does not all get there. I came here for the family. I do not speak English. I like my Church. It gives me spiritual help. It makes me feel safe. I cannot always go on Sunday because I always work. I have a shrine in my room. I pray every day. [Sri Lankan migrant – this man was unaware of a minimum wage and unsure if he had the right papers to be in the country now].

Case 3

A young couple wanted to move from Poland. They found details of an "agency" on the web which promised to arrange a job and place to stay. They arrived at Luton airport, were met, and then driven to an office where they were asked for their £300 registration fee. They paid, and had their passports photocopied. Having been driven to a nearby house they then had their bags unloaded. As they walked to the door – while the driver said he had to get something from the car – the man who had met them drove off at high speed leaving them behind. At the house door they knew nothing about the agency. Confused and bewildered they somehow managed to find the Catholic Church and they are now being looked after.

Case 4

Marcos is a 50 year old man from Brazil. Separated from his wife, he has two daughters, 20 and 22, back home.

Marcos arrived in the UK in April 2005. Before that he has been working for the government and as a taxi driver. However, shortly before coming to England he lost his job. At his age finding a new job in Brazil was not easy, moreover so as the country's economy was not flourishing. His friend, who was already working in the UK, suggested to Marcos trying his luck here, promised to help him finding a job and bought him a plane ticket. After arriving in England, Marcos had three stressful months, while trying to find a simple, low paid job. In addition to his age, one of the difficulties was the fact that he did not speak English. Meanwhile his

friend was covering all his expenses, and Marcos knew that one day he would have to pay him back.

Eventually, Marcos did manage to find a washing up job in an Italian restaurant. Although he says that on this job he is treated like everybody else, he earns less than others (and less than the minimum wage). One of the reasons for lower pay, according to Marcos, is his very poor English. He works very long hours, from 10 am to 1 am, every day except Sunday. At the end of the day, his hands hurt because of the constant shifting between the two taps of hot and cold water.

For the few hours off he has left every night Marcos comes back to his accommodation in the Elephant & Castle area, where he shares a room with his two other countrymen. In total nine people are living in the house, and all of them are sharing one kitchen and one bathroom. According to Marcos, he does not care very much about the poor living conditions since he comes back home only to sleep.

Being a practicing Catholic who used to go to Church every Sunday in his home country, Marcos started attending a Catholic Church in London only two months ago. He says that only then he found out that there were Masses in Portuguese. Also, this is the only Church he knows how to get to, as generally he does not find his way easily around London. Although he attends Portuguese Catholic Mass every Sunday and likes the Church, he also used to attend Protestant Church in Brazil. He says that Protestant Church better helps to “work with one’s faith, listens more and teaches how to use faith to achieve one’s goals”.

Despite his long working hours and low cost accommodation, Marcos thinks he is not earning enough money to save, since he is sending part of his income to his relatives back in Brazil. Besides, he feels very lonely in London, therefore he wants to go home as soon as he can afford a plane ticket. Marcos has one friend, who lives in his house, and they go out from time to time. One of the reasons for poor social life is lack of free time, another – poor English. Marcos is keen on improving his language and regrets that he found out about the English course organised by his Church only recently.

Marcos would stay in England if he learned some English, made a few friends and found a better-paid job. He says that life in the UK is more secure and offers more opportunities than that in Brazil. He would like to join a workers’ association or trade union because he thinks it would help to assure better working conditions. However, he does not have information about such associations and is afraid he couldn’t participate in their activities due to his poor English.

SECTION THREE: CONSISTENT INITIAL FINDINGS

3.1. “THE FEAR OF RHETORICAL SOLIDARITY”

It is of vital importance for the Cardinal, the Archbishops and the Bishops to note that the single most consistent finding among all those interviewed is the fear that fresh expressions of solidarity by the Church’s leadership will not be matched by future resources and deeds on their part. In the case of the poorest migrant workers this view is particularly acute, as we have found that it is to the Church that they turn *first* trusting her - and hoping in her leadership - more than government, market, lobby group, or trade union.

This perspective could be discounted by saying “that they only look to the Church and the Bishops because they are unaware of statutory provision” or “people at the bottom always look to those at the top” or “people expect too much of Bishops”. Our respondents however were more often than not excluded from welfare provision from both voluntary and government sources because of their legal or age status, had concrete insights into what the Church had been able to achieve in other countries with minimal resources and could not believe that Bishops would seek to admit pastoral failure at the outset.

One interviewee kept coming back to a “biblical vocation” that she wanted to put before London’s Bishops in particular – and the wider government and business authorities in general: “whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you do unto me”.

3.2. AN “IRREGULAR” AND “STRUGGLING” CHURCH

It is also of critical importance for the Cardinal, Archbishops and Bishops to appreciate the extent to which they are ministering to a Church whose baptised members live in fear, and at grave risk, because of their “irregular” status.

Concretely, this means that there are now at least tens of clergy knowingly and unknowingly ministering to thousands of parishioners who are “irregular” or “undocumented” in terms of their presence in the UK. Indeed, during our research we encountered *at least* three parishes in London where, according to extensive conversations we had there, we estimate that more than *three quarters* of those regularly at Mass are “irregularly” in the country.

There are many others with significant numbers of “irregular” visitors often present at Mass. Given the inability of some workers to attend Mass every week (see below), the number of such people in the extended parish family is higher still.

In the above-mentioned parishes and elsewhere some parishioners told us that although they wanted to help our survey they could not do so for fear of the consequences if they were identified by “the authorities”. Of those in our sample who did reply to the question as to whether they had a National Insurance number, 23% indicated that they did not. Similarly 5% of about half of the sample who replied to the question about their immigration status admitted that their visa had expired with a further 9% indicating that they were seeking asylum. A great many, in interviews or in writing, regretted their total lack of personal papers.

In addition, several Priests of local parishes declined to assist with the study because of the duty of care and confidentiality that they felt they owed their intensely vulnerable, because irregular, parishioners. Some African migrants we interviewed insisted that they could never tell the whole truth about their status to anybody, not even to their friends, and they would not be ready to speak to a white person about their status. In this case the interviews were conducted by an African Priest. Indeed, in one of those majority migrant parishes in which we judged there to be in excess of 75% of attendees who were “irregular”, our attempt to distribute questionnaires produced a nil response. This was despite the ethnic chaplain’s strongly vocal support and the expressed enthusiasm of those present for the cause, the project and the Bishops stand.

Likewise, one interviewed Priest felt that the last thing that the immigrant workers wanted was any hint of a spotlight on them. Rather, they preferred to quietly get on with working, perhaps with long hours and demanding shift patterns, unobserved in the interstices of the system.

It is a mark of the fear inspired by some who have brought migrants to this country – and the authorities - that there is sensitivity of talking publicly about what form such “help” with moving countries has taken. One Priest has found himself being called to hospital in the early hours of the morning where he found a parishioner who had been profoundly assaulted – mutilated – for defaulting on a loan which had been secured on a family member back home. This migrant had agreed to come to the UK under the mistaken impression that papers, food and accommodation would not be false documentation, left over food in the restaurant where he worked and a sleeping place on a restaurant floor after closing time. The Priest reported that this kind of encounter was not exceptional.

One ethnic chaplain remembered a case of an Argentinean couple who worked for two months and were not paid at all but, not having a contract, they could not complain and ended up surviving on £10 a week on milk and bread.

Being illegal, migrants are reluctant to ask even their own embassies for help. Even those who considered themselves to be explicitly and legitimately seeking asylum very often shared in this fear. They spoke of roughshod treatment on the part of authorities with inadequate access to legal advice, representation and even basic phone calls to contact family members. Some Priests had been involved in quite traumatic situations, not least when a major bereavement in the home country led to an “impossible” need to return home to pay respects.

Based on interviews with migrants and Priests, we have established that even those migrants who are entitled to legal employment, due to difficult economic circumstances and lack of language skills, often work illegally (see, for example, Box 4).

Box 4

Some Polish people work for less than the minimum wage because they are weak. Also, they don't speak English, so what can they do? How can they fight for their rights? These are mostly recent migrants - that's why they don't speak the language. I think that after spending some time in England, one has to learn English. Of course, there is big Polish community, Polish shops, etc. but one has to ask oneself "why am I here?" Girls who work in my hotel are paid by the agency £2 or £3 per room and have to clean about 10 rooms a day as quickly as possible. [Polish woman]

This is of course even more often the case among non-EU citizens who come to the UK from Africa, Asia and Latin America:

Box 5

Many new migrants who come to this country do not have permission to work. They come to try to build their lives but they are not criminals and they do not want to sell drugs on the streets. So they are trying to get fake documents. There is so much suffering... [Nigerian man]

In this climate of personal fear, pastoral protectiveness, misinformation and social reality it has not been possible for us to quantify definitively the *number* of irregular workers in the midst of the Church in London. However, while the World Bank estimates that 22.5% of all migrants in the UK are of irregular status we have encountered many settings where the level of irregularity is up to three times this averaged number. Combined with our research responses we would cautiously put the level of baptised Catholic “irregularity” in the thousands to tens of thousands.

This is a reality that impacts well beyond the ethnic chaplaincies and so cannot be reduced to a “minority” fringe. Today “irregularity” is a core experience of baptised Catholic Londoners.

SECTION FOUR: SOCIAL NEEDS

But what living and working conditions produce this reliance on the Church, this cry to the Bishops for help? And how does “irregular” status and personal insecurity manifest itself on a day-by-day basis? It is on aspects of these concrete experiences that we focused and the results are no less challenging for the Church in particular and wider society in general.

4.1. WORK AND INCOME

For many of those surveyed work had been the main motive for travelling to the UK at the outset. As we have noted this personal entrepreneurship is affirmed by the Treasury whose own growth forecasts are predicated on a view of increasing migration to the tune of 180,000 new arrivals per annum. It is also supported by an increasing number of employers who reportedly find migrants hard working, reliable, skilled and cost effective.

Access to work for migrants then, along with its nature, quality and durability are vital to London’s wider economic development. Its impact on Catholics is of direct pastoral concern to the Church. Its effect on human flourishing is of further concern to the Church and all other bodies in society concerned with the common good.

It is striking that our research records a low wage, long hours community of Mass goers, not least when experiences of work and levels of income are benchmarked against educational attainment.

4.1.1 EMPLOYMENT STATUS

71% of those surveyed reported that they were employed (Figure 5). 6% had 2 jobs and almost 10% reported “self employment”. The proportion of self-employed migrants is highest among East Europeans (15%) and Latin Americans (12.2%). While we have not been able to establish which proportion of self-employment covers a range of direct contracting roles which would normally be construed as “employment”, we noted that responses from East and Europeans followed the pattern of other research showing a link between the choice of UK as a location for migration and a willingness to be entrepreneurial.

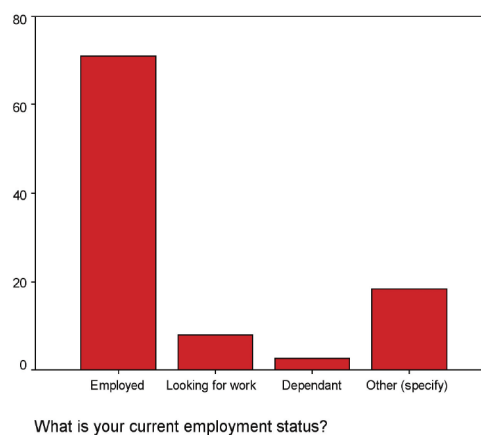


Figure 5. Employment Situation of the Surveyed Migrants

4.1.2 WORKING HOURS AND PAY

Whatever the reported employment status was though, these were people working uniformly long hours: 50% indicated that they worked over 40 hours a week, 25% over 46 hours and 10% over 56 hours¹ Cumulative percentages.

. For many, life in England meant only one word – “work”:

Box 6

Nothing really good happened since I came – one day is followed by another similar day, and there is no free time for anything. It's only work, work, work. That's what most of the people do. After ten hours at work you return home shattered and just want to go to bed. [Polish woman]

Those surveyed also reported low levels of pay especially when compared to their levels of educational attainment. A huge 35% across all regions are taking home £5 or less per hour suggesting that more than a third are being paid less than the minimum wage. (Differences between regions in terms of minimum wage are reflected in Table 1).

Table 1. Percentages of Migrants Getting Less than the Minimum Wage

Migrants' home region	Percentage of migrants getting paid £5 and less an hour – legal minimum wage
Latin America	40%
Asia	40%
Eastern Europe	30%
Africa	30%

Overall, 50% of the surveyed migrants earn £5.90 an hour and less. Only 25% earn more than £8 per hour and even the range above this is very limited in nature. There are slight differences between the four groups in terms of average hourly pay (Table 2). East European migrants earn on average slightly less than African and Asian migrants but more than Latin American migrants.

Table 2. Average Hourly Take Home Pay by Region

Migrants' home region	Average hourly pay received by 50% of migrants	Average hourly pay received by 75% of migrants ²
Africa	£6.3 and less	£8.3 and less
Asia	£6.1 and less	£8.8 and less
Eastern Europe	£5.9 and less	£7.5 and less
Latin America	£5.6 and less	£7.4 and less

One possible reason for these differences is statistically significant correlation between take home pay and education, time of arrival in the UK and language skills, as illustrated by the Figures 6, 7 and 8.

¹ Cumulative percentages

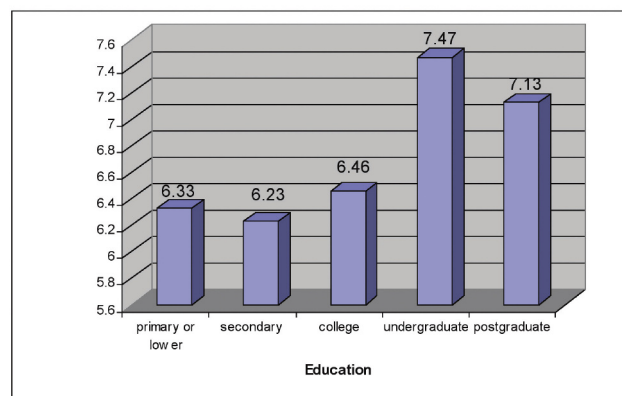


Figure 6. Relationship Between the Average Take Home Pay and Education

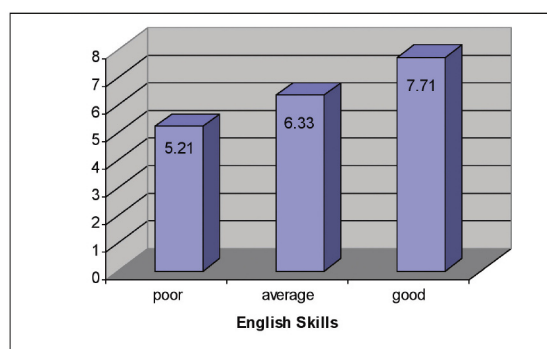


Figure 7. Relationship Between the Average Take Home Pay and English Skills

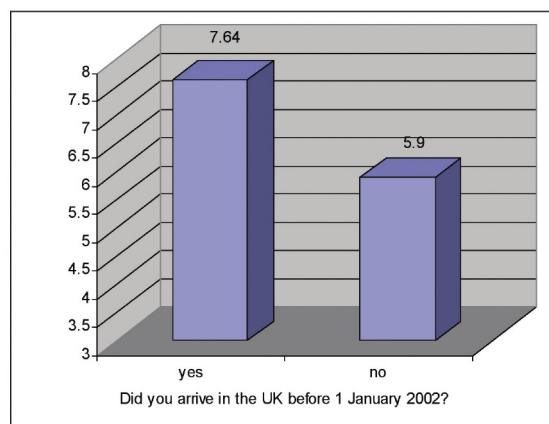


Figure 8. Relationship Between Average Take Home Pay and Time of Arrival

As one might expect, there is a statistically significant negative correlation between average hourly pay and the number of working hours (the lower the average hourly pay migrants earn, the more hours they work). This finding can also be illustrated by qualitative data, for example:

Box 7

Being paid £3 an hour, I worked for 12-14 hours: the number of hours was determined by the work available. But we were glad to work as long as possible because it meant more money. At times we were out of work for a week or so, in other words we were never sure whether there would be work tomorrow. [Lithuanian woman]

4.1.3 WOMEN AND WORK

Women are especially vulnerable in terms of pay, as their average hourly pay tends to be lower by £1 compared to that of men (Figure 9).

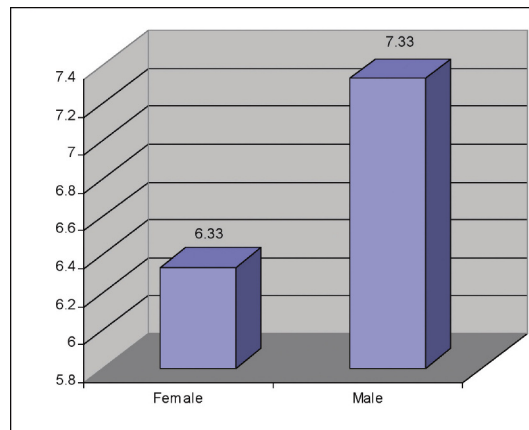


Figure 9. Average Take Home Pay by Gender of Respondent

4.1.4 WORKING CONDITIONS AND (IN)HUMAN RELATIONS

Our qualitative data suggests that low wages are compounded for the group in our survey by very poor working conditions, humiliating treatment and a perceived and actual “discrimination”:

Box 8

Those eight months were the worst nightmare because the supervisors treated us like dirt. This was the case because we were employed illegally. I could never imagine that people could treat their fellow human beings so appallingly. We were afraid to say a word against them, or else they could “sack” us for 2 or 3 days for punishment. I remember looking at the sky and, seeing a plane, bursting into tears because I wanted to go back home so badly. Even today, those East Europeans who still work for that factory are being paid only £3.5 and experience the same kind of behaviour. They are mostly Poles who work there illegally because they were not able to find a better job. If any of them ask for a raise they are immediately told not to come back tomorrow. [Lithuanian woman]

Box 9

I started working for an agency which sent me to various restaurants to wash the dishes and wait at the tables. I remember spending 8-10 hours a day at the sink, scrubbing burned pots. In most cases I hardly had time for lunch break, although in one restaurant the chef would give me some leftovers which I had to eat without being seen. Once the agency sent me to serve as a waiter on “City Cruises” where supervisors were shouting at me and other waiters as if we were dogs. Since I was not ready to put up with such an attitude and said something back, the agency was told that my services were not required there any more and I did not get paid for those few days. [Lithuanian man]

4.2. HOUSING, ACCOMMODATION, HOME AND THE NEW RACISM

The metaphor of “home” is one that runs as a constant reminder of the related experience of “journey” among those who have responded. “I do not feel at home in England because I do not have a home,” said one respondent. In some responses a link was made between “feeling at home” and “ownership of property” while others reported that they “felt more *at home*” in London because of its

diversity and its “openness” compared to “home”. One focus group of young Poles said that they felt “more at home” because they were “away from home” in the sense that they found Polish liturgy – in Poland or in a UK based Polish Church - turgid and boring.

Cutting across this, however, is a strongly reported view that Church is a “home away from home” and the institution and location in which the vast majority feel most secure and of which they have high expectation. We will return to the findings related both to feeling at home and Church as a home in the next section.

4.2.1 ACCOMMODATION TYPE AND QUALITY

But what of the actual living conditions and experiences of our sample? Do they provide a place where rest can be found in-between long shifts? And to what extent are they a cause or consequence of isolation and other life experiences?

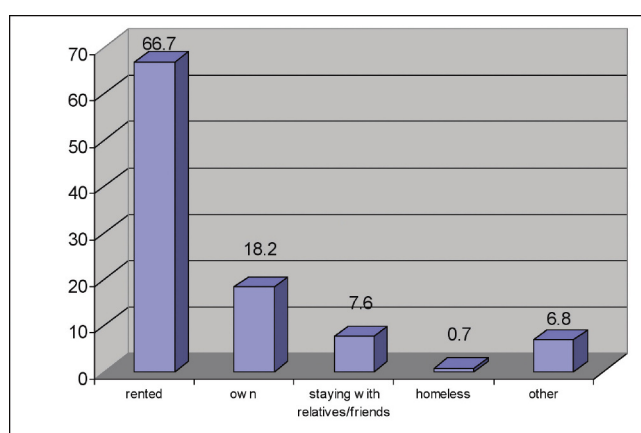


Figure 10. Types of Accommodation of the Surveyed Migrants

Nearly 70% of respondents are living in rented accommodation and a further 8% are lodging with friends or relatives (Figure 10). Many in focus groups reported that since arriving in the UK they had experienced very poor living conditions, often combined with exploitation by the employer and landlord.

Box 10

My first accommodation was in a house with eleven other housemates. I stayed there for a year, and it was a very difficult year because of the noise and crowdedness. We were three people in a room, once even four. The landlord was our employer and he put a lot of pressure on us. If any of us tried to find other accommodation or complained about living conditions, he would threaten to fire that person. There was hardly any furniture in the room, except a two-door closet for four people, while the rent was £45 per person. All twelve people shared one bathroom and one kitchen. In the mornings we used to have a strict regime for using the bathroom – strictly no more than 5 minutes per person. [Lithuanian woman]

Box 11

We are lucky to be just 4 Polish girls in the flat, even if we share two bedrooms meaning that there are two of us per bedroom. It is not unusual for other Poles to live in a house sharing it with 10 or 12 people. That means sharing one kitchen and one bathroom. Actually, when I just came I lived in a house where there were 18 of us sharing two bathrooms. [Polish woman]

Of those prepared to reply to this question, 35% were sharing a room with more than one person, 20% with 3 or more people, and 6% with 5 and more people³³ Cumulative percentages.

. Our African interviewees reported that many shared homes with others, sometimes with up to 6 people sharing a room or sleeping in shifts while others were working during the night.

According to the interviewed Priests, recently arrived unaccompanied male migrants, including those from Accession Countries, “endure” the poorest conditions. These can include sleeping on the floor, on landings and in hallways or “hotbedding” and all in over-crowded situations.

The sanitary conditions in such circumstances are often less than ideal. 17% of respondents reported sharing a bathroom with 6 or more other people, 10% - with 8 and more people. Half of respondents were sharing a bathroom with 4 or more people⁴.

Again we discovered a relationship between length of stay and experiences on other fronts including those related to levels of rent (Figure 11). On average, more recent migrants tend to pay lower weekly rent, reflecting the poorer accommodation, the necessity to share with others and the reliance on informal and untested networks to find a dwelling in the first place.

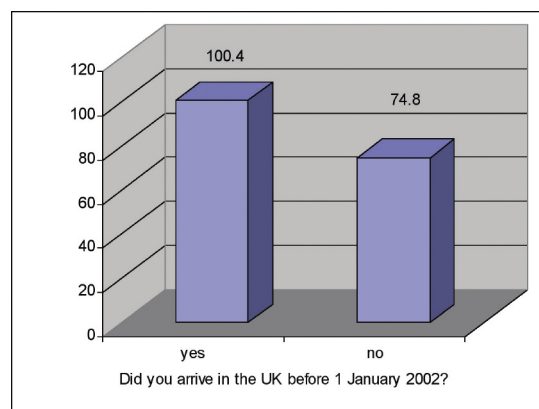


Figure 11. Relationship Between Average Weekly Rent and Time of Arrival

Higher proportions of our sample are concentrated in the poorer areas of London, with quite a few of them residing in Barking, Canning Town, East Ham, Elephant and Castle, Finsbury Park, Forest Gate, Hackney, Leyton, Peckham, Plaistow, Seven Sisters, Stockwell, Stratford, Upton Park and Walthamstow.

4.2.2 HOMELESS MIGRANTS

From clergy and migrants we heard compelling narratives relating to homelessness and consequently we undertook some additional research to explore patterns in this field of the debate about home, accommodation and living conditions.

The Cardinal Hume Centre for young homeless reports that in their experience young Eastern Europeans face the toughest of challenges to gain work or to survive on the streets, when they lose work. They also face the most hostile of approaches in the manner of their policing on the streets.

Both the Cardinal Hume Centre and The Passage experienced large increases in the number of accession country nationals presenting in the months after May 2004. By April 2006, 50% of those seeking help from The Passage's Employment, Training and Education Unit were migrants who had come for work but fallen on hard times. It has not been easy to respond creatively to these demands as the cost of translation and interpretation for a small voluntary organisation can be a financial strain. Meanwhile, resources allocated to the task by local councils were mainstreamed so quickly

³ Cumulative percentages

⁴ As above

that they do not reach those providing services for those sleeping rough. The clearly stated view of the Cardinal Hume Centre and The Passage was that the combination of the economic right to work in the UK with an exclusion from access to welfare state services was creating a pool of accession country migrants who are experiencing intense need.

In the context of a feeling that there is a “new racism abroad” with regard to these people we noted with strong interest that one Catholic homelessness agency had decided to use “country of origin” as the basis by which to ration its services: Poles looking for help are being turned away on the grounds of being from that country. The allocation of resources on the grounds of race or national origin would normally be described as explicitly “racist”. Our research has shown the great variety of need *within* national groups depending on language skills, age, time of presence in the UK and other factors. To define need in relation to “nationality” then risks actively excluding the needy and subverting the Bishops’ vision of welcome. The homeless people we interviewed certainly felt this keenly.

This said we have noted that in the run up to the publication of this report the Cardinal has actively been canvassing more support for the Church’s agencies in this field recognising the immense scale of the challenge they face. We trust that our recommendations with regard to this problem build on this personal recognition of the problem and the exhortations to his Diocesan clergy to help the agencies further.

4.2.3 HOMELESSNESS FURTHER EXAMINED

To test lived experience even further we surveyed and interviewed homeless Poles other than those using the Cardinal Hume Centre or The Passage. The pattern the agencies reported was replicated.

In one homeless centre 75% of ca. 100 guests coming for meals are Polish. According to the project workers, Polish clients can be typically described representing one or more of the following categories:

- 1) Those who came to the UK via agencies which promised work and accommodation but failed on their promise;
- 2) Those who lost their job after having worked in the UK for a few months or even weeks;
- 3) Those who came independently hoping to find a job but were not successful;
- 4) Those exploited by hotels, restaurants and other employers who pay very little (often employing them illegally) or do not pay at all, which often means they cannot afford proper accommodation;
- 5) Women who were forced to turn to the lowest paid prostitution.

Of the 27 surveyed homeless Poles almost all claimed to go into a Church at least weekly to pray in their native tongue. Most were living with depression and had not find a way to access any health services when ill. This is contributing to “vicious circle” as many need treatment and more substantial help than free food and a place to sleep.

One in 3 had become homeless after they “lost their job”. Some 10% reported unlucky choices of company, of business failure, of being the subject of personal theft or of promised casual work being even more irregular than expected.

At the moment of survey, all but 2 of the respondents 27 were unemployed. This status was due to a mix of lower than normal educational attainment rates in our full survey combined with expressed

language difficulties. Only 1 of those surveyed 27 had national insurance number, confirming that when employment had or could be taken on it would be in the realm of “illegal” labour.

Only around a quarter of the surveyed arrived in the UK this year. Some of them have been in the country for as long as 2-4 years. About half indicated that they did not know where to look for a job and about two thirds did not feel at home in Britain. On the other hand, one in four indicated that they nevertheless intended to stay in the UK for 5 years or more, while one in four planned to stay indefinitely. The motivating factor here was expressed as being a mix of “shame” at admitting failure if the journey home was undertaken, while a combination of sporadic work and some charitable assistance was better than that alternative.

SECTION FIVE: IN SEARCH OF COMMUNITY AND SOLIDARITY

5.1 “BEING HOME”

In the face of these trying work circumstances and demanding living conditions 41% of the surveyed migrants said that they did not “feel at home” in Britain. It would seem that the experience of migration and the lived experience in London has been in many cases dislocating and isolating. However there are some important exceptions to this finding to which we will return in later sections.

We found a statistically significant correlation between feeling at home and the time of arrival in the UK, the level of English spoken, pay received and the extent of an individual’s social circle. These factors also affected the likelihood of the respondent feeling depressed. 45% of the surveyed migrants described their social circle as “being small” while nearly 40% reported varying forms of depression. These patterns are shown in Figures 12 and 13.

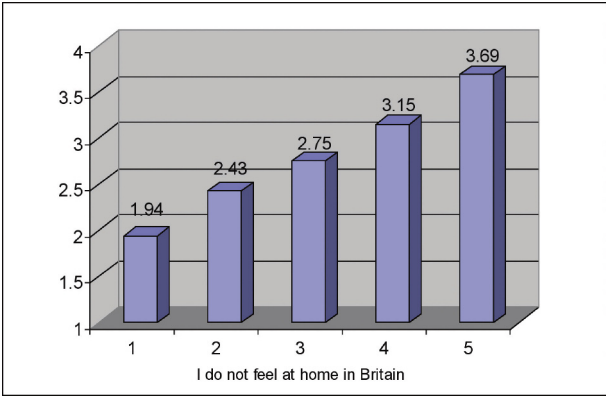


Figure 12. Relationship Between Feeling Depressed and Not Feeling at Home in Britain (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)

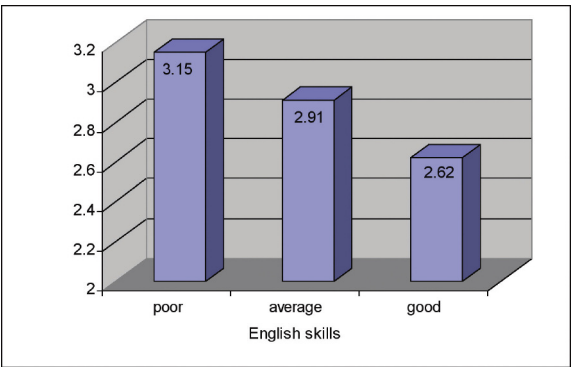


Figure 13. Relationship Between Level of English Skills and Feeling Depressed (1 – strongly disagree, 5 – strongly agree)

Needless to say, the interrelatedness of all these matters should not be underestimated: To summarise, low pay often means long working hours with a lack of time and money for building a social circle. Similarly, more recent migrants work more and earn less, so they are more lonely, depressed and hence vulnerable not only in economic, but also in psychological terms. So, for example, out of the surveyed groups more East Europeans and Latin Americans (about 50% in both cases) do not feel at

home in Britain (Figure 14). This can strongly influence their idea and experience of parish and reciprocal sensitivities to a whole series of events.

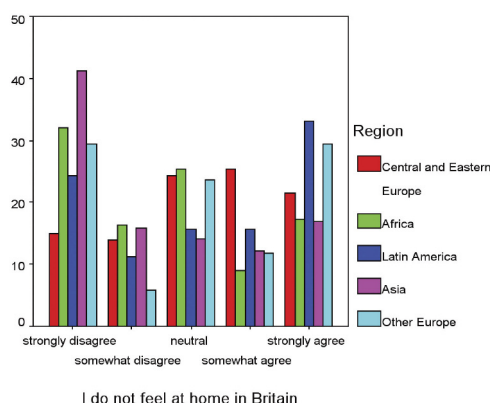


Figure 14. Distribution of Answers to the Question About Feeling at Home in Britain

As we will see, parish communities can act as a powerful counterpoint to this isolation but our survey shows that when they fail to do so they can radically accelerate isolation and cause harm: In one parish migrants were far and away the largest group and yet were “hectored” about their need to “integrate” with an “indigenous” congregation that had essentially collapsed. On a few occasions some “indigenous” clergy had handed out long lectures on what it meant to be a migrant, the failings of ethnic chaplains and again trenchantly reiterated the need for “integration”. There were repeated reports of some “indigenous” Catholics – lay, Ordained and even in the Episcopacy – making disparaging comments about forms of Catholicism at variance with the “English theological norm” – although this negativity was at least matched by the force with which some migrant clergy felt that the vibrancy of their congregations was “saving” the English Church. All the same the pastoral impact of all of this can be disastrous: in one place some African migrants had formed their own prayer group to compensate for what they felt was the lack of welcome in the whole.

However, while some bad experiences were reported they should be treated seriously but not as the systematic norm.

5.2 UNIONS, ASSOCIATIONAL LIFE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social networks can make an immense difference in facing and overcoming poverty and insecurity. Such networks can assist community building in more ways than one. This is why in our view the idea of “diaspora” can be useful both as an analytical tool and as a mobilising language that speaks of interconnectedness and shared history. However, given the London Bishops’ focus on issues of pay and workers associations we have tended to concentrate on trade unions, parishes and friendship links. These form part of the social capital which communities have carried with them, stored or constructed in the UK. We have looked at the isolation that many feel and now we turn to the moments of community, participation and solidarity upon which they can draw and – crucially – which social institutions they trust most to help them in that task.

When asked if they were members of a trade union, workers association or similar organisation, only 11% of the respondents said “yes” while 29.9% indicated that they are not members but would be interested in joining such organisation.

Over a half of the respondents (59.1%) indicated that they were not interested in joining any workers association or union. When asked why, among the most frequently mentioned reasons were:

- Not liking the idea of belonging to a union;
- Being sceptical about benefits of joining;
- Having no intention to stay in the UK permanently;
- Lack of information;
- Lack of time.

Having established this, the attitude among different regional groups also varied. A bigger proportion of Africans and Asians reported they were members of the unions (29.4% and 14.6% respectively) compared to East Europeans (3.1%) and Latin Americans (8.8%). The latter two groups are also much less interested in joining a union (63.6% of East Europeans and 74.5% of Latin Americans said they were not interested) (Figure 15). We were told by clergy that in case of East Europeans this would likely be “due to their aversion for collectivism after 50 years of the communist regime” but, either way, respondents were sceptical about the potential of trade unions or similar organisations to help them. In some cases this carries to other forms of associational life also, symbolised by the remarks “I don’t like the idea of unions”, “I don’t like taking part in any organisation”, etc.

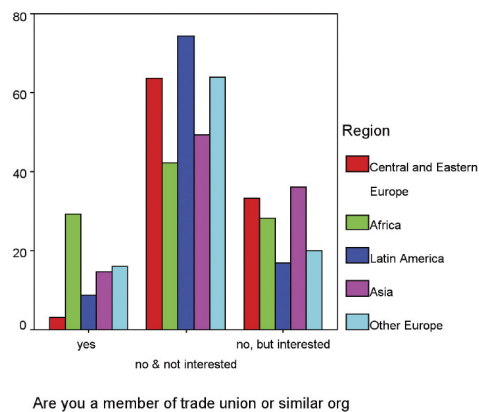


Figure 15. Membership in Unions, Workers’ Associations and Similar Organisations

Nevertheless other explanations were still present and these included fear of “revenge” from employer:

Box 12

When Lithuanians were hired by the company, they all joined the union and started resolving any on the job problems using a union lawyer. As a result, our Egyptian manager is very unhappy with this. Once he lost his patience and said, “I hate you Lithuanians. You will see, the day will come when none of you will work here.” Recently a Lithuanian woman I knew asked me to help to find a job and I asked my manager whether he needed any new staff. He said no, although the next day he hired a Czech woman... [Lithuanian woman]

Our statistical analysis suggests that the more often respondents attend Mass the more likely they are to be either members of a trade union or workers association or open to joining one. This reflects international research in other population groups. In this case it can be further explained by the correlation between less frequent Mass attendance, longer working hours, lower pay and poorer language skills. So, along with these economic and social constraints, work places and living places with thin social capital seem to compound the ability to develop habits of participation and belonging in community and vice versa.

SECTION SIX: CHURCH - A SOURCE OF SURE AND CERTAIN HOPE

6.1. CHURCH – HOME AWAY FROM HOME

For the vast majority of our surveyed respondents though the key means by which isolation can be addressed at first is through the Church. As we mentioned, many of these vulnerable people regard Church as a refuge, a harbour of hope and worship, where the idea of a Eucharistic feast is also grounded in lived community.

50% of surveyed migrants attend their main church every week, 13% - more than once a week. Another 18% go to Mass 2-3 times a month (Figure 16).

In our view this figure would be higher still were it not for working patterns experienced and reported by respondents. The evolving nature of work on the Sabbath and a so called 24/7 economy means that many migrants work shifts and are unable to attend Mass every weekend, so significant peaks and troughs are a feature of attendance in “migratory” parish life. For example, one ethnic chaplain observed that he has a core Mass attendance of 150 and 250 people at Sunday Masses but throughout the year his church will be attended by about 5,000 migrants.

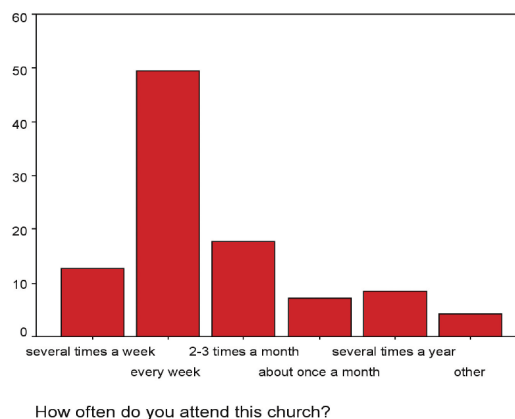


Figure 16. Frequency of Church Attendance Among the Surveyed Migrants

In addition to the main church, 29% of migrants indicated that they attend other churches on a regular basis.

Our interviews with a number of ethnic chaplains suggest that despite some anecdotal concern there is a great deal of integration into local parishes taking place. Migrants often attend local Catholic churches as well as ethnic chaplaincies and this increases in likelihood if their children are enrolled in Catholic schools. Chaplains observed the development of dual identities in such cases.

To name a few, reasons for attending Mass included “being in church is like breathing to me”, “feeling at home”, a “Home away from Home”, and “in order to meet God”. One Nigerian migrant said: “I come from a Catholic home, so if I don’t go to Church I don’t feel complete. It is my opportunity to talk to God – that is what I sincerely believe.”

An “active community life”, mentioned by 31% of the respondents, is also critical and reaffirms the link between Eucharistic participation and a reduction in feelings of isolation. This active community life can include food, exuberant dancing, swapping notes on job opportunities, sharing

troubles and so on. One Religious Order that specialises in this area said: “we want our Centre to become an intercultural mission for all migrants which helps them to preserve their identity but also to build one community. We believe that everybody is important and has something valuable to share.”

Similarly, one ethnic chaplain pointed out, “Church has become a focal point for them – that is where many of these migrants met each other for the first time. Only Eucharist brought them together.”

The sense of community and belonging that they received from active participation in the life and activities of their religious group was also stressed by a number of African migrants that we interviewed.

The availability of Mass in mother tongues is another important reason for migrants to choose a particular church. This was especially compelling for East Europeans (86%) and Latin Americans (64%), who, being relatively more recent migrants, and for cultural reasons, have poorer English skills (Figure 17). For Catholics within these groups attendance at Mass is a vital part of the week.

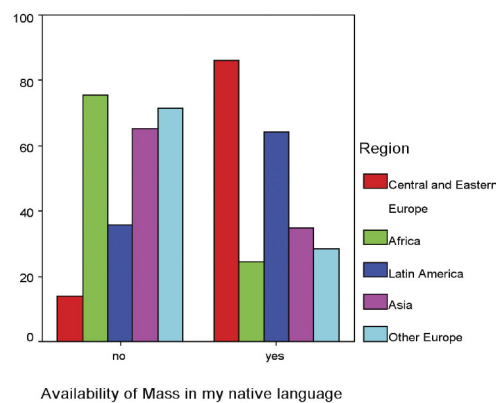


Figure 17. “Availability of Mass in Native Language” as a Reason for Attending the Church

In sustaining community and drawing migrants into local life the skills of local clergy are vital to success. The factor of a “friendly Priest” plays quite an important role, especially for Latin Americans and this may be linked to levels of vulnerability (Figure 18).

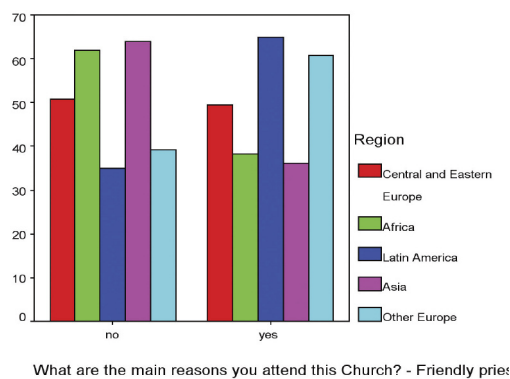


Figure 18. “Friendly Priest” as a Reason for Attending the Church

6.2 EXPECTATIONS FROM THE CHURCH

Respondents know and acknowledge how important the Church is in their attempt to survive personally and build a sustainable life. When asked how the Church could help to make their life in Britain easier, 77% of migrants emphasised “help to become integrated into the local society” as important or very important (Figure 19). This was especially the case for migrants with the worst and best English skills (as opposed to average). Again this is likely to be linked to the level of experienced vulnerability but also, in this case, with a sense of untapped potential by exclusion.

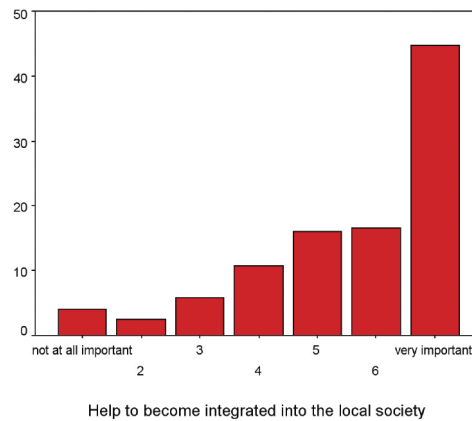


Figure 19. Expectations from the Church in Terms of Integration

Participants of our survey thought that the Church could embed its expressed commitment to them in concrete ways. She could “provide welfare services” (64% said it was important or very important), “help people to find jobs” (58%), “provide access to legal advice on work/ financial/ immigration matters” and “provide English classes” (53%). She could also “provide some financial support in case of emergency/ crisis” (52%) and “help to find low cost accommodation” (39%).

Replying to an open question “what else Church could do?” migrants most frequently mentioned:

- Build community;
- Help to preserve national culture and promote ethnic parishes;
- Provide information/ advice on various aspects of life in the UK;
- Seek amnesty for undocumented migrants.

In addition, our focus group participants suggested a few other ideas on the ways Church could help migrants:

Box 13

My two Italian flatmates who arrived recently had a real nightmare trying to open a bank account. They had to arrange a number of letters, go back and forth, and the whole thing was really complicated. As there are so many things newly arriving people do not know, maybe the Catholic Church could gather expertise and knowledge of its members. For example, if a migrant wants to get a teaching job, maybe the church could say “ring parishioner X who has the expertise and who will provide you with the necessary information”. The same thing with writing a CV – the CV I wrote in Italy would have been totally useless for finding a job in Britain. It’s a cultural thing. So, maybe the Church could help migrants drawing on help of the parishioners – of course, I wouldn’t expect Priests to do this... There are still many Catholics like me who feel that going to a Catholic Church is like joining the family, having your own community in a strange country, some place where you belong. [Italian woman]

Box 14

For many migrants living in London it is difficult to get their children to the schools they want, especially Catholic schools. Maybe parishes could establish sort of committees made up of people who do have experience and information about getting into Catholic schools. These bodies could help parents who want their children to attend Catholic schools to prepare for this in advance. The Church could promote such arrangements in parishes. [Italian woman]

Finally, what migrants expect and hope from fellow Catholics is understanding and respect for their ways of worship and cultural identity. As African migrants put it, “the Priests and Church leaders may be very kind but do not understand the real needs of migrants.” These migrants think that quick liturgies and sermons are not the thing that Africans want. One said that she was shocked that at a funeral of an 89 year-old man the Mass lasted only 25 minutes. She exclaimed: “One has lived 89 – listen 89 years – and he is sent off in less than half an hour. What a scandal.”

However, in the end migrants do appreciate the Church’s efforts of welcoming strangers and making them feel at home as much as possible:

Box 15

While there is some racism, I think Catholic Church is transgressing many communities. In the Anglican Church you can’t see so many multicultural parishes. I read in the history of Catholic Church that it tried to welcome immigrants, while Church of England would not allow people to come in unless they were English. The Catholic Church always tried to do something for immigrants coming into the country. I think even if we are not there yet, on the whole we are not doing badly. [A woman from Ghana]

6.3 “SPIRITUALITY” AND “SPIRITUAL” MATTERS

We are aware that there is a debate in Catholic theology as to whether “spirituality and “spiritual” matters should stand apart from other aspects of life in a form of religious specialisation or as a discrete mode of religious experience and enquiry. While it has not been our intention to enter into such debates it has been our strategy at each stage to encourage respondents to talk about what they consider to be “spiritual” and to ask open questions with regard to the variety of ways that the Church might assist respondents.

It is perhaps significant that in responses from all global regions the main preoccupation has been with living conditions, working conditions, the impact of migration and long hours on family life, loneliness, isolation and the comfort gained by meeting and sharing with others facing a similar set of challenges. Worship in this setting is a source of solace and comfort, inspirational preaching appreciated and a committed and understanding pastor seen to be vital. These responses may indeed be representative of a particular form of “spirituality”, or they may be deemed “inadequately spiritual”, or they may even be a challenge to spiritual and theological thinking as the Church and its Bishops in London have known it. We simply report here what respondents have fed back to us at this stage and note that we will be pursuing further research in this field in due course.

SECTION SEVEN: A COMMITTED BUT STRETCHED CLERGY

7.1 A PRIEST'S EYE VIEW

We have already touched on the extent to which clergy are at the forefront of the reality of modern migration. They labour at the coalface of increasingly demanding needs encountering, in most cases, situations for which they were “neither trained for nor which they know where to turn for training or help if the thought occurs at all”.

Episcopal and senior clergy's oversight of ethnic chaplains and support meetings for them are appreciated but are viewed as only small beginning. Firstly, this does not address the support needs of clergy who are not in explicitly “ethnic” chaplaincies. Secondly, if the supporting senior clergy can only offer words of comfort there is a risk of a lack of follow through or of problems being referred back and forth. Third, it does not recognise the reality that some Auxiliary Bishops are as much at the whim of overseas Religious Orders and Dioceses in accessing new help as they are under pressure from local demands. A good deal more work is needed to build a comprehensive platform of support and best practice exchange but the following consistent feedback is a notable “base camp” from which to begin pastoral reflection.

All the Priests and ethnic chaplains we interviewed were at pains to emphasise that life was a “real struggle” for many new and recent migrants and that this struggle flowed back into the heart of their pastoral work. The key components of the struggle include elements of fear in the host society, families divided between London and the country of origin, pressure on new arrivals because of elevated expectations as to likely remittance levels in countries of origin. In many African cases this had led to “totally crippling bride prices” and other financial “responsibilities”. Clergy are acutely aware of the factors we have highlighted above such as the stresses of low pay, shift work, physical isolation, language and communication issues, transportation and a range of discriminations of one form or another. One Priest added that this was leading to mental and other health difficulties in his congregation. All expressed the need for additional support in order to be able to cope let alone be innovative in their pastoral work. Additionally, some Priests are, after all, migrants themselves settling into a new arena for the first time.

7.2 PARTICULAR PROBLEMS

Particular practical problems that were consistently raised included:

- (i) A common concern at the variety of ways that ethnic chaplaincies without their own Church are treated financially by parishes across the three Dioceses of Brentwood, Westminster and Southwark. In many instances ethnic chaplaincies are charged rent by the “local” parish making some chaplaincies that have scarce resources feel vulnerable and unwelcome. The lack of a common policy across the Church in London is currently compounding this expressed feeling of an inadequately warm welcome and a perception that there may be a tension between Episcopal expressions of support and Diocesan policy. In a few instances our interviewees pointed out that this feeling of being unwelcome and a landlord-tenant relationship is sometimes enhanced by “somewhat arrogant” attitudes of local clergy towards ethnic Priests who can be made to feel “patronised”.
- (ii) Ethnic chaplains are normally appointed or allocated by overseas Churches to “serve” the local

diaspora community in London. In some countries such an appointment can be prestigious. In others it is unwelcome. It can often be a case of the Dioceses in London taking “whoever they can get”.

In a small minority of cases we have established that a Priest who finds himself in a difficult pastoral situation at home – and we do not mean one that puts parishioners at legal risk - has been transferred to London to resolve a local difficulty at home. This may lead to a renewed energy thanks to a fresh start but it can also mean that some of the most vulnerable parishioners in London may be being cared for by Priests who are not truly in a position to proffer or sustain such help. Such Priests – migrant themselves – are left doubly isolated in a new country, facing huge demands, while trying to cope with loss, bereavement or other profound grief without being able to admit to it publicly.

- (iii) Priests are very often the first port of call for those seeking help and yet asylum, refugee, employment and Visa law and policy, change so often and at such speed that it is not easy to keep pace. While some have been lucky to have secured a little *pro bono* assistance, many are concerned that they do not know where to turn for help – or how to conscientiously help those that approach them.
- (iv) In some Deaneries there is a perception that the role and contribution of ethnic chaplains – or some parishes with large migrant composition - are misunderstood and under-appreciated. It was put to us on many occasions “that without Bishops or lay staff who truly specialise in supporting a post-Irish, post English Church ...with its attendant mix of liturgical exuberance, liturgical conservatism, theological conservatism and radicalism... need for language skills at meetings and exposure to the world Church on the part of its Bishops ...we will be lost.”

SECTION EIGHT: RECOMMENDATIONS

We referred at the outset to the pioneering leadership model offered by Cardinal Manning in the context of London and the way that the Cardinal had found inspiration in his witness. Manning lived at a time of major social change and new challenges and took decisive action to launch fresh educational bodies, to bring new Religious Orders to London and to found ground breaking charitable institutions in response to social needs. We also referred to Cardinal Hume who, among others, founded institutions to enable the Catholic community to put its strong principles into action.

A third and perhaps even more relevant example of the pioneering contribution of the Church to social innovation was its immense contribution to the emergence of an anti-homelessness movement in London and nationally at a time when a large section of the voiceless had no voice.

In the port City of Southampton Fr Pat Murphy O Connor noticed that Catholic prisoners being discharged from Winchester prison faced particular struggles with alcohol, accommodation and brushes with the law. He founded the St Dismas Society as an agency to meet their needs. Significantly some of St Dismas Society's early members went on to found the Simon Community in Sussex and then London. As they gave rise to new inspiration this in turn led to the founding of Centrepoin, National Cyrenians, the Shelter Housing Aid Centre and thus Shelter itself. The Church acted to care pastorally for her own and was able then to make a broader contribution for the wider common good. Our recommendations are made in a similar spirit believing that when minded to do so the Catholic community has the moral and financial resources to respond generously and – where necessary – to found new institutions which can “give legs” to principles, turn ideas into action, and make words into deeds. More importantly our recommendations are drawn directly from the testimony, insights, experiences and suggestions of those that we interviewed.

At the present time the three Dioceses are also led by Bishops who have track records as “bridge builders” and as advocates of social justice and who, jointly, named the needs of migrants as a pastoral priority at the migrants' Mass.

We were advised at the outset that the report, and possible responses in word and deed, would be given the space for full discussion at parish, Deanery and Diocesan level. Like migration itself the Church in London will need a process by which changes can be put in place. But in the view of those we interviewed there is now a space for the Church both to take a lead for its own people and more broadly in this field. From what they have said thus far this seems to be a challenge that the Bishops are willing to face with enthusiasm.

We talk in some places about a “common policy” between Dioceses. This is not intended to undermine Episcopal autonomy. It is, however, to recognise that many responses may be easier to sustain if supported, or co-ordinated, on a pan –London basis. The pooling of efforts may make actions more achievable. The three Dioceses have started this journey together and may gain much by continuing on a shared path.

It may seem as though we have made a lot of recommendations. This is because there are a many needs, problems and gaps. Even the recommendations are only a beginning of a wider conversation that should engage the Dioceses. To the Bishops jointly and severally, based directly on our survey feedback, we make the following recommendations:

8.1 FINANCIAL RESOURCES: SOME DONE - A QUESTION OF ACTING ON NAMED PRIORITIES

Any serious attempt, even on a small scale, to respond to the needs that we have begun to uncover in this report will require fresh – or re-allocated – financial resources. We put this heading deliberately at the outset of our recommendations in order (i) that the implication of moving beyond “rhetorical solidarity” is clear and (ii) that the risk of initiating new actions which actually add to the burdens of the over-stretched is minimised. With this in mind we recommend:

1. That the current policy of consolidating dispersed charitable funds which are ring-fenced for pastoral development and the poor in the Archdiocese of Westminster be affirmed.
2. That a meaningful proportion of such already ring-fenced funds, together with other funds, be specifically earmarked as a “*London Pastoral Fund For Migrant Communities and Projects*”. Local Parishes and projects across London should be able to bid on at least an annual basis to this fund to develop new models of response to the needs we have described.
3. That the allocation system for these funds be modelled on existing grant making criteria within the Diocese of Westminster Pastoral Department and/or that the grant making function be outsourced to an appropriate specialist grant making body if local institutional capacity does not make it possible to organise this in-house.
4. That in the months and years to come the three Dioceses develop this fund, if necessary by the institution of a new annual collection or other fundraising drive, supported at the most senior levels.
5. Recognising the pan London, and cross-Diocesan nature of migrant needs, that a senior Diocesan member of staff (or Priest) in each Diocese be allocated to discuss and deliver joint planning on funding and fundraising and together seek at least matching funding from charitable foundations, London Development Agency, the Greater London Assembly and other sources. This need not mean opening “new offices” but simply making the lines of responsibility, desired outcomes and accountability clear.
6. That Diocesan trustees, Finance Committees, and Councils of Priests be requested by the Diocesan Ordinaries to *discuss* means by which such pastoral funds could be enhanced from Diocesan and parochial resources in other ways with a mind to such further funds being further matched by foundation, charitable and statutory resources.

8.2 PASTORAL POLICY AND APPOINTMENTS: COMPLETING WHAT HAS BEEN BEGUN AND TAKING SOME FURTHER STEPS

1. That the work begun in Jan 2007 to establish a common policy across each of the Dioceses responsible for London’s Catholics with regard to the charging of “rent” should be accelerated by parishes to ethnic chaplaincies for the use of Churches and other buildings. Such an improved policy should include consideration of the existing assets of chaplaincies, the possible importance of a central fund and the real needs of parish members.
2. That the three Dioceses draw up a common policy on the recruitment and appointment of ethnic chaplains. As part of this the three Dioceses should seriously consider co-ordinated approaches to relationships with key overseas Bishops Conferences, Dioceses and Religious Orders with regard

to the above process. It should build on the excellent work begun by the London ethnic Chaplains Group to move in this direction.

3. That the Bishops and Dioceses find new and constructive ways to support, encourage and develop the work of Catholic voluntary agencies who are facing particular pressures in the face of the new migration and its surrounding public policy framework. This should include the sharing of good practice on racism awareness training, cultural sensitivity, policy changes and access to statutory funds and support.
4. That each Diocese review its policies with regard to the inclusion of Priests with particular experience of migrant issues in mainstream and senior Diocesan committees and councils, and their attendance and welcome at Deanery meetings.
5. That the Dioceses should review the involvement of lay migrant voices in the leadership of Diocesan structures.
6. That in the preparation of *terna* for the appointment of Auxiliary Bishops and Diocesan appointments attention be given by Archbishops and the Nuncio to foreign language skills, experience of the Church overseas and pastoral exposure, in an urban setting, to diverse migrant communities from the global regions we have surveyed.

8.3 NEW INITIATIVES, EDUCATION AND BEST PRACTICE SHARING – NEW ACTIONS

1. That in addition to encouraging new practical initiatives at the parish level a fresh education process for parishes should be established with the idea of a welcome for the stranger at its core. This could be led by the existing pastoral board, social responsibility, adult education teams and justice and peace bodies of the Dioceses among others.
2. That the Church in London should “twin” with one or more global cities facing similar challenges with a mind to sharing Episcopal solidarity and theological reflection, successful pastoral models, clergy in-service support and lay formation. The US, German and French Churches may be particularly significant in this regard. The striking insights of the *Caritas Europa* federation are likely to be key drawing as they do on the very best of Diocesan and parochial work alongside migrants, women being trafficked and refugees across the EU and further afield.
3. That the Dioceses, jointly and severally, should consider the establishment or re-launch of new charitable bodies to enhance the Church’s response in this field. By this we do not necessarily mean the creation of new Diocesan structures. Responses suggested to us could also include parish or Deanery based language classes, CV workshops and job related advice provided by volunteers, and some sharing of catechetics in foreign languages. It might also include strong guidance to Children’s Societies and Diocesan bodies. Alternatively it could include a central point, or appointment, for the three Dioceses which could run or support all of these and more.

8.4 TRAINING - ESSENTIAL

1. That in addition to a parish-based process of education training events be made available for clergy, lay people, schools and Diocesan staff.
2. That pastoral exposure to migrant communities be made a compulsory element of clergy training for seminarians from the three Dioceses.
3. That language skills be considered as a legitimate seminary course and clergy, parish volunteer and lay employee training activity and cost.

8.5 COMMUNICATION, SUPPORT AND AN “ETHICAL PORTAL” – A PROJECT FUNDABLE BY FOUNDATIONS AND STATUTORY PARTNERS

1. That the three Dioceses should collaborate to create a single “ethical” multi-lingual web portal which may cascade to other pages but which guarantees a single access point which could be driven to the top of search engine rankings. This would be available to those migrants already in country and family members trying to help them from abroad. It could include, for example:
 - (a) Information on all ethnic chaplaincies;
 - (b) Information on the languages spoken by Priests across the Diocese;
 - (c) Information on how to contact Church and other bodies for pastoral, welfare and legal advice;
 - (d) Information on how to contact Embassies, community associations and other national or regional groupings;
 - (e) A notice board of employment agencies which have been vetted by Church volunteers for their scrupulous treatment of migrants;
 - (f) A notice board of accommodation opportunities with landlords who have been vetted by Church based volunteers;
 - (g) A database of cost effective and ethical remittance transfer providers;
 - (h) Information on workers associations, trade unions and basic employment rights in the UK context.

8.6 POLICY DISCUSSION, AND REFLECTION

1. That jointly the Bishops of London should call an elite level colloquium modelled on Chatham House rules. By bringing together secular policy specialists, policy makers, senior business executives, representatives of faith communities and senior academics the Bishops should seek to create a space in which (i) the impact of current legislation and corporate practice on Catholic and other migrants can be more fully understood and (ii) in which the Bishops’ can reflect further on the Cardinal’s expressed support for regularisation.
2. That in preparing such a seminar the Bishops consider drawing upon the expertise of the Office for Refugee Policy of the Catholic Bishops Conference Secretariat.

8.7 PROPHETIC PREACHING

1. That, alongside with initiating new practical action and reflecting on policy the Bishops consider how they might use their preaching role jointly and severally in order to affirm and encourage both migrants and those who work with them.
2. That as part of 1 the Bishops consider pastoral letters to their parishes to coincide with the plans already in place with *London Citizens* for a new Migrants Mass in May 2007.

SECTION NINE: CONCLUSION

This is the first and key pastoral report of a three-publication enquiry into the social and pastoral needs of migrants in London's Catholic congregations.

The report describes a section of the Catholic community facing tough living conditions, harsh working conditions and constant economic and personal uncertainty. In many cases this uncertainty is profoundly aggravated by the lack of papers or legal status which is often caused by social isolation and language difficulties rather than technical irregularity.

This faithful, vulnerable and energetic group take their Catholicism seriously and have high hopes of the Church and her Bishops when it comes to assistance in their days of need. We commend their lives, the work of those who walk with them and our recommendations to the three Dioceses of Westminster, Southwark and Brentwood.

Selected Bibliography and Resources:

We have been particularly pleased to have sight of publications, and conversations, with those working in this field in Hull (Patrick O Doyle), Bristol (Tom Bigwood and the Clifton Justice and Peace Commission), Southampton (Canon John O Shea) and the Channel Islands (Canon Nicholas France).

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