

*When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*

Leviticus 19:33-34

*Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod.*

Matthew 2:13-15

*Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.'*

Matthew 9:13-14

*How can we justify Australia's policy of deterring people from claiming protection in the light of Jesus' words? As a nation, we harm innocent people by detaining them, pushing back their boats and transferring them to other impoverished nations. We pretend that the pain and diminishment of one group of people, including children, is a justifiable price to pay for sending a message to others. This policy dishonours the human dignity of people who seek protection and denies the truth of their humanity.*

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If there is a question of priority in who we should care for, Jesus' message is crystallised in the Catholic social teaching principle of the option for the poor. It says that the test of solidarity and of commitment to the common good is the care we have for the people who are most disadvantaged. A just and healthy society is one in which all people are able to live decently, and where all contribute to the needs of the weakest, including non-citizens. This principle applies to communities and nations, not simply to individuals.

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