

## 5. Welcome the Stranger

### GATHERING

William Butler Yeats is reputed to have said: “There are no strangers here; only friends you haven’t met yet.” This perspective underpins Jesus’ call to shelter the homeless and welcome strangers. To be a stranger is to not fit in or be recognized, but this state is only temporary – once words are exchanged the stranger becomes an acquaintance and eventually maybe a friend. The challenge then is to connect, build relationships, say hello, smile and include.

### READING

Ruth is the story of a young woman who found herself in Israel, a country that differed in culture, religion and background from the one in which she was raised ...

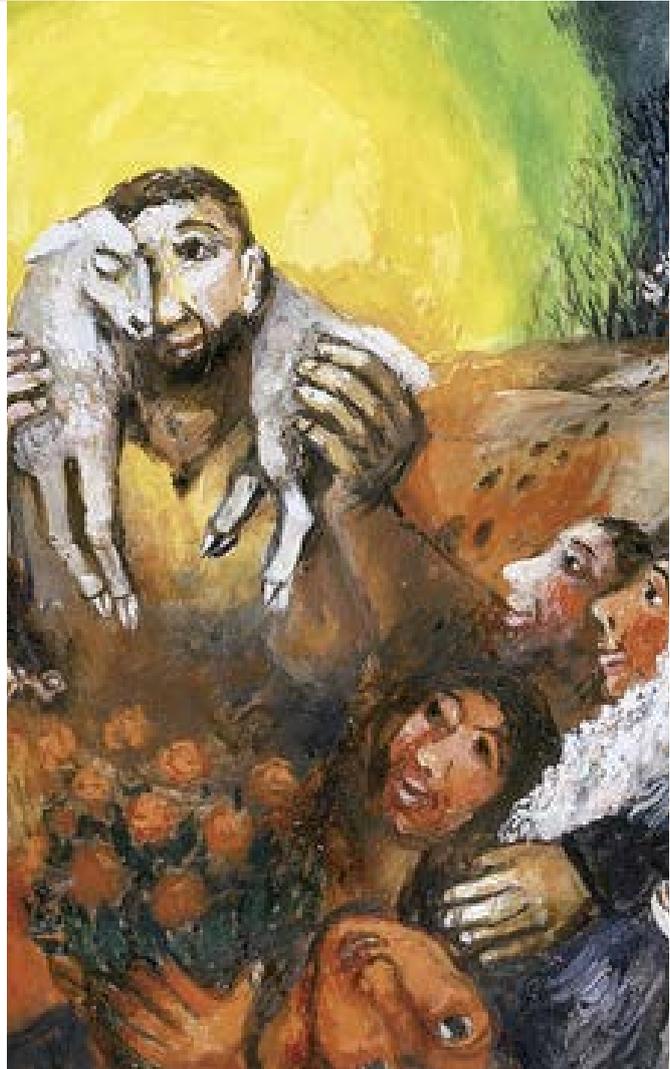
This is a story about crossing boundaries, of an immigrant who came from a country that was deemed “suspicious,” and about overcoming prejudices by showing compassion and financial generosity specifically to the displaced within our communities.

The book of Ruth is a reminder that people of faith are called to stand in prayer, friendship and practical support with all those within our community. ([goo.gl/QZW65U](http://goo.gl/QZW65U))

But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. (Ruth 1:16)

### BIBLE PASSAGE

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10: 14-16)



### DISCUSSION

**Are there groups in your experience who are labeled and treated differently? How can you work against this and build inclusive structures?**

### PRAYER (PAUSE FOR ANY SPECIAL INTENTIONS)

Source of Unity and Life

May we be shepherds in our world

Seeking out the lost and isolated

Including with a word and smile those who are marginalised

Challenging prejudice and division based on race or religion.

Like Ruth may we put relationships at the centre of all that we do

Amen.

*May the works of mercy inspire and enrich your ministry in Mercy Partners*

## LIVING THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

### Welcome the stranger

*Ask: Who needs a safe space?*

*Reach out to the unloved and the unpopular*

*Practise radical hospitality*

### Visit the imprisoned

*Ask: What captures people today?*

*Give up attitudes and habits which*

*Help those who are prisoners and the*

### Visit the sick

*Ask: What brings comfort to the sick?*

*Be there for people who need you*

*Be aware of those in your community*

### Bury the dead

*Ask: What do you need to bury?*

*Put away those things which can bring*

*Move on from the negatives of the past*

*Remember with gratitude those who*

### Show mercy to our common home

*Ask: What can you do to nurture the earth?*

*Practise simple daily gestures which*

*Show mercy to all of creation*

*Support action for the environment*

### Feed the hungry

*Ask: Who is hungry and why?*

*Protect food sources and biodiversity and oppose waste*

*Share resources – 'be more' rather than 'having more'*

*Support those who feed the most vulnerable*

### Give drink to the thirsty

*Ask: What are people thirsting for?*

*Oppose the privatisation of water*

*Be ever mindful of people who need the basics of life*

### Clothe the naked

*Ask: Who is the vulnerable?*

*Protect the old, young, homeless, poor, trafficked...*

*Act for those who need human warmth*

*Be grateful for those who surround you in warmth and comfort*

## WELCOME THE STRANGER

- > **Support** a local homeless shelter and volunteer your time.
- > **Think** of the millions of children and families who are on the move, fleeing from war, illness, hunger and impossible living conditions, and searching for peace and safety. Engage your ministry, friends and family to discuss this issue and then encourage each other to do something about it (e.g. write to politicians, join advocacy groups or donate to organisations that support refugees, migrants and asylum seekers).
- > **Make** with your hands (and your heart) warm knitted or sewn blankets.
- > **Give** time and skills to Habitat for Humanity to ensure those who are disadvantaged and isolated can have a place to call home ([habitat.org.au/what-we-do/australia/qld](http://habitat.org.au/what-we-do/australia/qld)).
- > **"Feel"** what it is like to sleep rough by participating in the Vinnies CEO sleepout through individual or team registration and/or by donation (<https://www.ceosleepout.org.au/>)

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COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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