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The Judeo-Christian Redemptive History as an Alternative Framework for the Migration Debate

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Abstract

Migration is among the controversial subjects in modern political discourse. Today, all it takes to be politically relevant is to flaunt the dangers that migrants constitute to indigenes. The effect of this is that much of the agenda on contemporary migration debate is set by political and socio-economic calculus. This essay is an attempt to shift the focus of the migration debate to promoting the interest of migrants. Drawing inspiration from the Sacred Scripture of the Judeo-Christian tradition, it highlights the attitude of the Judeo-Christian God to people in search of places of refuge; and how this should affect what the Judeo-Christian religion teaches on how to relate with migrants. The essay reaffirms the values of solidarity and communion in diversity, as well as the need to re-establish the culture of hospitality as the affirmation of the person of the migrant.

Keywords: Migration, Judeo-Christian-Tradition, Hospitality, Culture-of-welcome.

Introduction

Migration is one of the greatest global phenomena and among the recognizable signs of the times today (Benedict XV, 2006). According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, 2020), the number of international migrants is estimated to be almost 272 million globally.[1] It is therefore not surprising that migration remains a burning issue in contemporary political discourse. All it takes to be politically popular today is to flaunt the immigration issue and extol the dangers that migrants constitute to indigenes. The effect of this on contemporary migration debate is that much of the agenda is set by political and socio-economic calculus.

Can the migration debate be carried on in way that emphasises more on the genuine interest of migrants? This is the question that this essay attempts an answer. Proposing the Judeo-Christian Redemptive History as an alternative framework for the migration debate, it argues that this is possible through a consideration of the many migration-related motifs that filters through the biblical tradition.

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[1]For all the hullabaloo involved in the migration debate, this figure remains a very small percentage of the world's population (at 3.5%), meaning that most people globally (96.5%) are estimated to be residing in the country in which they were born. For the up to date of the statistics of migrations today, see WORLD MIGRATION REPORT 2020 https://publications.iom.int › files › pdf › wmr_2020. Accessed April 19, 2022. See especially Table 1 on Key facts and figures from the World Migration Reports, 2000 and 2020 on page 10.

Within the broader framework of the Judeo-Christian Bible, the article exposes the theme of Flight from and into Egypt in both the Old and the New Testaments (henceforth OT & NT), what this reveal about the Judeo-Christian God and his attitude to people in search of places of refuge, and how this should affect what the Judeo-Christian religion teaches about how to relate to migrants.

The article is a theological reflection and library research. It consists mainly in a theological analysis cum exposition of secondary sources on the identified themes. After a brief explanation of the key terms – human migration and its dominance in the Judeo-Christian history, it considers the principal stadia in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures where the migration theme features prominently, and extracts therefrom lessons for contemporary migration debate.

Understanding the Migration Concept within the Dynamics of Human Mobility

Migration can be approached with different lenses (UN DESA, 1998), in relation either to the migrant's place of birth, citizenship, place of residence or duration of stay in the country of migration (de Beer et al, 2010). It denotes any movement by humans from one locality to another, often over long distances or in large groups. It is a sub-category of a more general concept of 'movement', embracing a wide variety of types and forms of human mobility (Salt, 2001). By definition, a migrant is a "person on the move, either voluntarily or involuntarily, in the person's own country, internationally, or both. Unlike refugees, migrants are commonly considered free to return home whenever they wish because their lives are not in danger there" (Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States, 2003, n. 24).

There are two major types of migration: internal migration, which involves movement to a different part of a country, often from country districts to cities; and international migration, which entails movement across a different country. Migration can also be group into other categories, such as, voluntary and forced migration, legal and illegal migration, etc. In recent times, the realities of foreign students, labour migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have also given different faces to migration.

The reasons for migration are varied. Writing specifically of international migration, the World Migration Report 2020 says:

> The overwhelming majority of people migrate internationally for reasons related to work, family and study – involving migration processes that largely occur without fundamentally challenging either migrants or the countries they enter. In contrast, other people leave their homes and countries for a range of compelling and sometimes tragic reasons, such as conflict, persecution and disaster (IOM, 2020, 19).

Irrespective of its root causes, migration "always implies an uprooting from the original environment, often translated into an experience of marked solicitude accompanied by the risk of fading into anonymity" (John Paul, 2001, 2). It involves a total sacrifice of all that makes life protected, and a wandering into the insecurity of the uncertain (Bühlmann, 1982).

Migration in the Judeo-Christian Redemptive Framework

From the call of Abraham to the Exodus from Egypt and Israel's wandering in the desert and later experience of exile, migration has been part of the Judeo-Christian salvation history (Groody, 2009). Along the same line, the New Israel whose story is recorded in the Christian NT also speaks about the incarnational mystery of God and Christian life from a migration perspective (Campese 2012; Matovina & Tweed 2012). What follows is an examination of the key stadia in the Judeo-Christian redemptive history where the migration theme was pre-eminent.

Abraham's Journey to Canaan (Genesis 12-37)

The Judeo-Christian redemptive history started with the call of Abraham by God to abandon his homeland for a land hitherto unknown (Gen12:1). Abraham's journey to the Promised Land, in religious perspective, was "the start of an epic voyage in search of spiritual truths, a quest that was to constitute the central theme of all biblical history" (Speiser, 1964, 87-88). In social-cultural perspective, it entails a total break with his immediate environment and a total sacrifice of everything that makes life secure (Buehlmann, 1982). In this, Abraham's experience is like the experience of millions of migrants that we see in the screens of our Television or read about in the pages of our Newspapers.

The uncertain nature of the goal was not the only thing that unites Abraham with today's migrants. By the time Abraham undertook his journey, Canaan already had a settled population; much of which, like Abraham, was Semitic. Although only Sarah and Lot are named as Abraham's companions, he was the head of a sizeable clan (Gen 14:14) with extensive flocks of sheep and goats. Because his flock cannot penetrate far into the desert without water, Abraham's basic need to have a source of daily water for his flock, "kept him wandering in search of new pastures, but restricted him to the belt of moderate rainfall between the desert and the cultivated land" (Jensen, 1982, 66). In this too, Abraham

became a prototype of all forced to leave their environment in search of greener pastures.

Egypt: A Place of Refuge (Genesis 37–50)

The scriptural notion of migration begun in Abraham was intensified when Israel, his descendant nation, migrated to Egypt (Bedford-Strohm, 2008), the circumstances of which form the central theme of the Joseph cycle of the Patriarchal History (cf. Genesis 37-50).[2] Although dependent upon oral tradition, the Joseph story reflects the historical conditions of the second millennium, when it was common for a Semite to rise to power in the Egyptian court (Anderson, 1986). Read in its present context, the Joseph's cycle serves as a transition from the ancestral period to the Mosaic age, providing an answer to the question: how did Israel come to be in Egypt in the first place? The narrator, in answering this question, emphasizes the divine purpose which brings the chosen people down into Egypt – from famine and destruction to food and prosperity – and which later will bring them out of slavery into freedom (Marks, 1983); concerns that are no less similar to those of innumerable numbers of migrants and refugees today.

Egypt: A Land of Bondage (Exodus 1-3)

Among the significant experiences of Israel as alien in Egypt were the promotion of Joseph (Gen 41:37-49), the offering of the best of lands by Pharaoh (Gen 47:1-12), increase in demographical and human resource (Exod 1:9-10), anti-Semitism/xenophobia and hard labour (Exod 1:1-14), heroic sympathy of the two God-fearing Egyptian midwives (Exod 1:15-21), etc. These chains of events reached their climax in the systematic oppression of Israel in Egypt, attributed by the hagiographer to the coming to power of a "new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph" (Exod 1:8). Although the biblical account does not identify the Pharaoh who introduced the policy that resulted in the oppression of the Semites in the Delta region, some critics (cf. Anderson, 1986) associate this with the 19th Dynasty, which began toward the end of the 14th century BCE with the oppressive regimes of Seti 1 (c. 1305 to 1290) and his son Rameses 11 (c. 1290-1224).[3]

Leaving aside speculations as to the cause and manner of the Exodus event (Jensen, 1986), one thing is clear: Israel has always considered the departure from Egypt as a special moment in her history. Of course, the people existed with Abraham, but only in promise. The Exodus is the moment when Israel received its solemn investiture as the People of God (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 2004). More than anything else in history, the Exodus gave the Hebrew an identity, a nation, a founder, and a name, used for the first time in the very first line of Exodus of the biblical account of the migration of "*bene Yisrael*" "the children of Israel" (Hooker, 1999).

Israel's Lessons from the Years of Oppression

The reality emerging out of the Exodus event is not just a new religious idea but the emergence of a new social community that had to devise laws and norms of right and wrong. That resident aliens (*gerîm*) should become subjects of affection in Israel's laws is understandable. As sojourners in Egypt, God showed love to Israel. So, Israel, putting its place in the other's place, is to love sojourners too, remembering that she once was in their position. The commandment to love one's neighbour, initially restricted to indigenes in Lev 19:18, was extended to cover foreign residents in Lev 19:33-34 (Jouette, 1982; Bedford-Strohm, 2008).

Among the usages of the term "foreigners" (alternately "strangers" or "aliens") in Semitic perspective, include the non-Israelite who came into ordinary contact with the Israelites.[4] As the *Interpreter's Bible* (1962, 50) puts it:

> Anyone not related by blood to a particular tribe or clan, but permanently associated with it and under its protection was a *gêr*. This classification was tribal and social, not primarily religious…. The word points out a resident who is not indigenous to a place and who is ethnically unrelated to its people.

Israel's Law provides that the *gêrim* should always be assured of hospitality (Gen 18:2-9; Judg 19:20; 2 Kings 4:8). Because they are weak, they should be guaranteed maximum protection; because they could not possess land and had no clan ties, all attitudes of economic superiority against them must be avoided; and because they are vulnerable and often poor, they must be shown solidarity through special legislation which does justice to their financial dealings (Exod 21:8; Deut

[2] The Pentateuch is usually divided into Primeval History (Gen 1-11), Patriarchal History (Gen 12-50) and People's History Exodus through Deuteronomy, although some add Joshua and speak of Hexateuch, since it was in Joshua that the promise of possession of Land was realized.

[3] Although it is impossible to pinpoint a definite date, many scholars believe that the Exodus took place early in the reign of Rameses II, whose mummy is on display at the Cairo Museum – that is c. 1280 BCE or shortly afterwards (Albright, 1950). This theory gains support from the fact that the cities of Pithom and Rameses, constructed around these times, are specifically mentioned in Exod 1:11, where we are told that Hebrew slaves were employed in their construction. Furthermore, according to Egyptian documents, these pharaohs used 'Apiru' – an old depiction for the Hebrews – in public projects (Anderson, 1986).

[4] In the OT, foreigners is also used with reference to the enemies who invade or threaten to overthrow the established order of Israel (Prov 5:10; II Sam 22:45-46, etc.), the gods of the foreign nations, which are temptations to Israel (Psa 81: 9; Jer 5:19; Deut 31:10; 32:12) as well as those barred from the cult (either freemen or slaves of Israelites (Gen 17:12, 27).

1:16; 14:21; 15:13). Bedford-Strohm (2008, 41) sees here the foundation for developing what he calls *an ethics of empathy*:

> Firstly, the commandment is emphasized as comprehensible and accessible from Israel's own experience: 'You know how it feels to be foreign and discriminated against. Therefore, treat the foreigner just like you would want to be treated if you were in the same situation!' Secondly, the reasoning for the commandment culminates by referring to God Himself: 'I am the Lord your God'. I adopt the cause of all foreigners just like I did you.

This, no doubt, is a panacea for ending the exploitation of migrants; and what a difference it will make if this is factored into contemporary migration debates.

The Flight of the Holy Family to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23)

As the NT opens, the situation of the Jews into which the Incarnate Word was born was not all that different from that of the countless millions forced to leave their countries in search of refuge elsewhere. Following Pompey's conquest of the Greek forces in 63 BCE, Palestine came under imperial Rome who administered Palestine through local heads in a quasi-indirect rule system. Sometimes these local agents, in the bid to impress the powers that be and to guarantee their privileges, do impose enormous hardship on their own people. Such was the situation of Palestine by the time of Jesus birth around 4 BCE during the reign of Herod the Great.[5] Although despised by many as a half Jew, Herod was able, through uncanny alliances with different Roman Emperors, to manipulate them into recognising him as the king of the Province of Judea in 31/30 BCE. His distrust of possible rivals led to the construction of inaccessible fortress palaces and the murder of his own sons. The brutal cruelty and virtual insanity of Herod's last years lie behind Matthew's account of his willingness to slaughter all the male children at Bethlehem up to the age of 2 as part of his desire to kill Jesus. For the second time in the Judeo-Christian redemptive history, Egypt is once more called upon to provide a place of refuge for the One around whom the New Israel will gather, just as centuries before it provided refuge for the progenitors of the Old Israel. Matthew's unique account of the flight referred to Hos 11:1 "Out of Egypt I called my Son", thus placing the Messiah's itinerary within the framework of God's will (Brown, 1993).[6] Such a background for Jesus' divine sonship stresses the continuity between Jesus and Israel (Harrington, 2001), indicating that Jesus represents the beginning of the restoration of all Israel (Brown et al, 1990).

Matthew is also unique in connecting the event in Egypt with another major tragedy in Israel's history: the Exile of the tribes to Assyria and Babylon. He sees the episode as another facet of Israel's whole spiritual experience summed up in Jesus by comparing the wailing in Israel after the great massacre on account of Jesus to the wailing of Rachel for her children in Jeremiah 31.[7] Matthew's ingenuity here lies, not so much in connecting the two events, as in relating them to what happened at Bethlehem. In the theology of Israel, the persecution in Egypt and the Exile were the two greatest trials which God's people had been subjected to; and the Exodus and return from Exile were the two greatest manifestations of Yahweh's protective power. By connecting both to Jesus, Matthew presents Jesus as reliving "both great past moments of divine salvation" (Brown, 1993, 217).

Christian Tradition and the Flight to Egypt Narrative

Like Israel did with the Abraham story and the Exodus narrative, Christian tradition has tried to derive some lessons on how to relate with strangers from the migratory experience of the Holy Family. Thanks to the Flight to Egypt narrative, Christians see in the foreigner the face of Christ himself who was born in a manger and fled into Egypt as a foreigner (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants, 2004). The Holy Family has become "a figure with whom Christian migrants and refugees throughout the ages can identify, giving them hope and courage in hard times" (Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States, 2003, no. 26); and Mary, the mother of Jesus, has become a living symbol of the woman emigrant, who not only gave birth to her son away from home

[5] Dating the birth of Jesus to the era of Herod the Great is one of the few features that appear in both the Gospel infancy narratives (Matt 2:1; Luke 1:5). On the assumption that the reference is accurate, the anomaly that Jesus was born "before Christ" results from an ancient mistake in calculating the year of his birth. In the 6th century CE, Dionysius Exiguus (Denis the Short) proposed to reckon years no longer from the foundation of Rome (A.U.C.: *ab urbi condita*) but from the birth of the Lord. Dionysius chose 754 A.U.C. as the birth year, a date too late because by the most plausible calculation Herod died in 750 A.U.C. See Brown (1997, esp. 59).

[6] The original context of the Hosean passage is Israel's Exodus from Egypt. It is, therefore, Israel that is referred to here as the Son of God. Commentators have been struck by the peculiar localization of this citation and the fact that it is somewhat foreign to the historical setting of the basic story to which it has been appended. Although it deals with the Exodus or coming "*out of* Egypt", Matthew inserts it as a comment on Joseph's taking the child and his mother *to* Egypt. By so doing, Matthew sees the filial relationship of God's people as now summed up in Jesus who relives in his own life the history of that people. But the fact that the child is saved by flight *to Egypt* also implies that Jesus relives not only the Exodus of Israel from Egypt, but also the departure of the sons of Jacob/Israel from Canaan into Egypt.

[7] The citation of Jeremiah is somewhat not in line with the exact story line. Whereas in the OT tradition, Rachel was told to stop weeping because her children are coming back from exile, the quotation is used in the Matthean text in a context of unrelieved suffering.

(Luke 2:1-7), but was also compelled to flee to Egypt (Matt 2:13-14). In this way she stands for all mothers forced to leave the security of their home with their children in search of refuge elsewhere. Popular devotion is right to consider her as "the Madonna of the way" (Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States, 2003, no. 26) since she knows the pains of migration and exile.[8]

The Contemporary Church and the Migration Debate

The contemporary Church's approach to migration is based on its faith-centred outlook on "those biblical events that mark the phases of humanity's arduous journey towards the birth of a people without discrimination or frontiers, depository of God's gift for all nations and open to man's eternal vocation" (Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States, 2003, no. 13). For the Church, migration is not just a social phenomenon that must be approached from a sociological understanding of society. It is a phenomenon that touches the religious dimension of human beings and part of "a theological understanding of the Church as the new Pentecost" (DiMarzio, 2005, 98).

Again, the Church sees her presence in the migration debate as a continuation of the mission of Jesus the Good Pastor, that of forming the People of God, the Pilgrim Church, moving slowly and painfully, but steadfastly, towards the fullness of the Kingdom (Hamao, 2002). This pastoral care is based on the dignity of the human person from which all rights flow, including the right for an individual to remain at home in one's own country and cultural ambience [borrowing the English proverb, the right "to grow where you are planted"] and the right to migrate (cf. CCC, 2241). From these, the Church has developed a body of social doctrine, which proposes principles for reflection and gives guidelines for action (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2423). Guided by these principles, the Church plays the role of an advocate in the vast field of human migration. She not only insists on the recognition of the right of the individual to be unhampered in immigration or emigration into any country in which the individual hopes to be able to provide more fittingly for him/herself and his/her dependants; she also recognizes the obligation, on the part of the State, to assure to migrant families what it guarantees to its own citizens.

Recommendations

The crisis experienced today on account of migration calls for a meaningful responsive theology to shape the migration debate. In the words of Groody (2009, 641): "The current climate points to the need to move the migration debate to an even broader intellectual terrain, one in which theology not only has something to learn but something to offer". This essay concludes by pointing out three areas where theology can make some contributions.

Confronting the Deteriorating Culture of Welcome

Among the negative effects of the ever-growing anti-immigrant sentiments today is the amputation of the culture of welcome in the human heart. To reverse this trend, we can draw strength and inspiration from testimonies of the Sacred Scripture. According to the US Bishops' Conference (1986, no. 16):

> The biblical injunction to extend hospitality to the stranger overcomes the tendency to see newcomers as a threat to our comfort, institutions, culture, and lifestyles…. It helps the imagination to devise … initiatives and structures which empower immigrants to be themselves and which make it possible for their presence to enrich all with a pluralism of gifts in celebration of diversity.

This culture of migratory hospitality, which re-echoes the universality of God's love, demands the progressive integration of migrants through commitment towards their family unification, education of children, participation in public life, adequate housing, job availability, etc. Real integration requires a firm determination to eradicate hostile attitudes and stereotypes that promote the anti-culture of inhospitality. It requires "the building of a society that can acknowledge differences without absolutizing them and foster a generation of citizens formed in the culture of dialogue" (John Paul II, 2001, no.2). Here, the Christian community is equally challenged. As ambassadors of Christ, Christians are called to see in the "foreigner" Christ who "pitches His tent among us" (cf. John 1:14) and who "knocks at our door" (cf. Rev 3:20).

Illegal Immigration and Anti-Immigration Law

Illegal, irregular or undocumented migrants, terms often used to refer to "'clandestine', men and women in illegal situations", remain a frequent occurrence in the field of human mobility (Blume, 2001). On this unfortunate "signs of our

[8] Worthy of attention here is the fact that among the three new invocations that Pope Francis added to the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary in June 2020 is "Solace of Migrants" (to come after Refuge of Sinners); the others being "Mother of Mercy" (after Mother of the Church) and "Mother of Hope" (after Mother of Divine Grace).

times", the Church condemns and vigorously combats the criminal activities of those bent on exploiting illegal immigrants. She argues that the most appropriate alternative that can yield long-term results is that of international cooperation aimed at fostering political stability and eliminating underdevelopment (John Paul II, 1996).

Similarly, while the Church respects civil migration law, so long as this is just; she is wary of anti-immigrants' propaganda that infects the Christian community. She insists that even the so-called "illegal immigrants" need to be provided with the necessary means of sustenance and, when possible, be helped to regularize their status. When no solution is foreseen, they should be helped to move into another country; and should this fail, they should be assisted to return in dignity and safety to their country of origin (John Paul II, 1996).

The Church also encourages the Christian community to give shelter to migrants, even those in irregular situations. This is not advocating "civil disobedience". Rather, by so doing, the Church is being true to her root as the place where these immigrants are accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various Dioceses to ensure that migrants, who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood in the Christian community (John Paul II, 1996).

Confronting the Issue of Brain Drain

The "brain drain syndrome" is another crucial issue that can hardly be side-tracked in any migration debate. It arises from the need for high skills in technologically advanced countries to seek satisfaction, often unilaterally, from the human resources nurtured in developing countries, thereby depriving these countries of badly needed human resources for their development. In the words of Michael A. Blume (2001, 8-9), a former Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People:

> The search for foreign talent sometimes even becomes a "hunt for brains", not a brain drain. That raises questions of justice: Does anyone have the right to buy talent from developing countries simply on the basis of having money to do this? Is it right to attract people who have been educated and raised in their homelands at much cost to their own social and educational services to serve the interests of businesses in other countries? This is a serious moral question that also affects the *personal capital* available in many countries.

The endangerment of any nation's valuable human resources is an offence against economic solidarity, which demands the concrete awareness of the reciprocal relationship between migrants' countries of origin and countries of immigration. Rather than multiplying the visa lotteries to fill up the loopholes in their labour markets, developed countries should help in the ongoing formation of consciences, individuals as well as national and international, on the demands of the universal destination of earthly goods, on international solidarity, and on the priority of persons over work and possession.

Tackling this monstrous phenomenon can benefit from some insights from the Judeo-Christian tradition, especially from Israel's experience in the wilderness en-route the Land of Promise. To be sure, Israel experienced grace in the wilderness; but "it was also a time of grumbling, revolutionary discontent and above all, lack of faith" (Anderson, 1986, 85). For all that could be said of the oppression that the children of Jacob experienced in Egypt, there is no doubt that in the judgment of many of the pilgrims, freedom in the desert was a poor substitute for slavery in Egypt, and on many occasions, they nostalgically longed for the "fleshpots of Egypt" (Exod 16:3; Cf. Anderson (1986).

This situation is not all too different from that of countless migrants of our time. That many do prefer enslavement and hard labour in the so-called "Lands of Promise" to having to eke out a living in hardship in their homeland is evident in the countless numbers of well-bred professionals who do not mind abandoning their noble and revered professions in their homelands to become street boys and girls in Paris, Rome, New York, Hamburg etc. The fact that the Lord God did not allow Israel such options but guided and guarded Moses to lead them through the pains of the wilderness also says something to our new generation migrants. They too should be helped to realize that running away from situations of hardship has never been ranked among great Christian virtues or philanthropist nobilities.

If there is anything that we should learn from Israel's intransigent allegiance to the Land of Promise, it is the nostalgic longing and hope of return, motivated by the realisation of the intrinsic discomfort of having "to sing the Lord's song in a foreign land" (Psa 137:4). In every respect, Babylonian culture, at the time that devout Israelites were weeping "by the rivers of Babylon" (Psa 137:1) was superior to the modest way of life the Jews had known in the land of Judah. In contrast to the grazing land of Judah, the rich land of Babylonia was a scene of thriving agriculture and teeming industry (Anderson, 1986). Yet the Israelites resisted complete

absorption into this domineering culture, and always entertained a nostalgic longing for return. This should serve as a lesson for the skilled migrants of our time. Whatever may have caused their having to flee from or voluntarily leave their motherland, they should always strive to maintain ties with their countries of origin to stimulate the reciprocal transfer of technology and capital.

Maybe here lies a message for all involved in the recent *clearance* controversy surrounding the obligation of parishioners who leave outside of home to supporting their home parishes. While this has been an ongoing controversy in Igboland, it was recently brought to limelight in the *call to share stories*[9] extended to many of her social media followers by the prolific writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie following the altercations she had with her home Parish Priest in the events surrounding the burial of her parents.[10] It also made headlines in the preaching of the firebrand Charismatic Preacher Fr. Ejike Mbaka.[11]

I am not making a case for pastors who exploit parishioners in moments of bereavement. And I am totally in solidarity with the two above in decrying the lack of Christian compassion that such extorting tendencies imply. But, in the light of the foregoing reflection on the need for migrants to maintain a nostalgic appreciation of their homeland, one wonders why modern-day migrants to "lands of opportunity" must wait to be compelled by *obnoxious clearance demands* before they should identify with their home parishes.

The governments and peoples of migrants' countries are also not absolved of responsibilities. Oftentimes, one hears stories of genuinely motivated skilled migrants who returned to their homeland with the intention of contributing their quota to her development, only to be frustrated by the suffocating atmosphere of corruption and dictatorial leadership. Especially the ruling class should be encouraged to respond properly to the challenges of human rights' protection, economic security, long-term economic planning, etc. to facilitate frequent homecoming of their citizens in foreign lands.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, our conclusion is simple: Rather than carry on the migration discussion based on the agenda of how best to curb its flow, an effort that will surely prove futile in our era of cultural diversity; efforts should be directed to how the enduring reality of migration could be better harnessed for the benefit of all. From the Judeo-Christian Redemptive history perspective, we are of the conviction that this is best achieved by genuine hospitality, just laws, solidarity and committed ecclesial advocacy; by avoiding seeing migration as a threat to be manipulated for short-time political gain at the expense of the most natural rights of the human person – including the right to life, to walk and to work.

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