

Tuesday Reflection

How did we get here?

I found myself wondering how we get to become Catholics? The obvious answer is “through Baptism”. But how do we get to Baptism? For cradle Catholics the answer is probably “through our parents”. For those of us like myself, who are converts, it is probably because somebody influenced us. Either way, we probably came to the Catholic Faith through what other people did for us.

Then I found myself wondering more generally about how we got to where we are. The ‘official’ answer is through our innate gifts and application and hard work. How is it that we come to live in a moderately prosperous society? In most cases it is not because of our determination and ingenuity, because if that were the case, those fleeing from persecution or ‘natural disaster’, take immeasurable hardships on themselves and risk their lives would have far more ‘right’ to be here than many of us. As a Guardian writer put it: “The truth is nobody wins their place in the UK; for most people it is the result of luck and circumstance, and they have no more right to ownership of it than the people risking their lives to get here. If anything, those people are working hard for that place, rather than simply being born into it. Borders aren’t accidents – but being born within them is an accident. Your entire life is an accident, a random luck of the draw. You do not deserve to be here, any more than anyone else deserves not to be here.”

Whether refugees are accepted here depends ultimately on the compassion and love of us all; as too is coming to Baptism.

Humility is about realising that our good fortune has very little to do with any inherent gifts we might have, just as another’s bad fortune has very little to do with any ‘defects’ they might have. It’s the luck of the draw, and love and compassion demand that those of us in more privileged positions - through no merits of our own - reach out to those who - through no ‘fault’ of their own are less fortunate.

Michael Townson